Sitaram Jha

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Shuddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.
Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

Sitaram Jha

Bhimnath Jha

Translated from the Maithili original
JAGADISH PRASAD KARNA

Sahitya Akademi

Sitaram Jha : English translation by Jagadish Prasad Karna of Bhimnath Jha's monograph in Maithili, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi (1983).

First Published 1990

ISBN 81 7201 0265

Sahitya Akademi
Rabindra Bhavan, 35, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 110 001
Sales · 'Swati', Mandir Marg, New Delhi 110 001
Jeevan Tara Building, 4th Floor, 23A/44X, Diamond Harbour Road, Calcutta 700 053
29, Eldams Road, Teynampet, Madras 600 018
172, Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400 014

SAHITYA AKADEMI
REVISED PRICE Rs. 15.00

Published by the Sahitya Akademi and printed at
Rajdhani Computronics Pvt. Ltd. 4/19, Roop Nagar, Delhi 110 007

Contents

Acknowledgement

This monograph on the life and works of Kavivar Sitaram Jha is my humble contribution to the Sahitya Akademi's unique publication scheme of Makers of Indian Literature series. In preparing this monograph I have availed myself of the books and articles on the poet by numerous scholars. Particularly an article by Dr. Ramdeva Jha and the research work by Dr. Surya Narayan Choudhary have been of great help to me. Pandit Govind Jha was very kind in going through the whole manuscript and in offering me his valuable suggestions. But for their invaluable help this book would never have seen the light of the day.

Life-sketch and Personality

Kavivar Sitaram Jha is considered to be one of the important pillars of modern Maithili poetry. Even though the modern age in Maithili literature is traced from Chanda Jha, the refinement and wide scope that we find in the language and content of Sitaram Jha's poetry make him the cornerstone of this age. His poetry flows with a strong current breaking many a barrier of literary conventions. The naturalness of language in his poetry and the raciness of his Maithili acquire such prominence that these alone would have reserved a pride of place for him in the history of Maithili literature. This is not to say that he devoted his extraordinary talent in chiselling only the beauty of his language, he also proved capable of generating in the hearts of his readers a compelling love for this language, Mai/thili.

Ten score versifiers had preceded Sitaram Jha but none, before him, except Vidyapati, had given such a clarion call to his contemporaries to dedicate themselves to the cause of Maithili, or had inspired and encouraged people to write in Maithili, and taught them to feel proud of their language. None before him had joined issues with the detractors of this language and, in fact, taken up cudgels on its behalf.

Of the few poets who brought a turning point in the course of Maithili poetry he is the foremost. In order to view the poetry of Sitaram Jha in a historical perspective, it is necessary to discuss those of his predecessors whose poetry had given a new direction to Maithili poetry.

Sanskrit being the only medium of education and learned discourse it is still not decidedly known as to who were those pioneering souls who had had the intuition and urge to write in vernacular. But this much is certain that from the eighth to the eleventh century A.D. some Siddhas did the spade work in the crusty land of Maithili poetry. Judging from the linguistic style and choice of subjects in the poetry of about twenty two Siddhas—Sarahpad, Sabarpad, Luipad, Bhusukpad, Binpad and others—out of eighty-four famous ones, it is easy to gather that these Siddhas must have

been from Mithila. They did the spade work and obviously it was on the strength of their efforts that the barren tracts of this language came under some kind of literary cultivation. Though Jyotirishwara is known for his prose-work *Varnaratnakara,* his title of 'Kavishekharacharya' proves that he was the best among many able practitioners of this art. The narrative style of *Varnaratnakara* and some Maithili verses found *in Dhurtasamagam* also strengthen this view. However, in the absence of sufficient number of his poems, Vidyapati has naturally superseded his importance.

In fact, it is Vidyapati, who, with his songs numbering over a thousand, first of all heralds the advent of spring in the garden of Maithili poetry. Thus Vidyapati alone had the unchallenged honour of establishing a sort of poetic empire in Maithili. After him poetry seems to flow from the pen of many poets who did little but imitate the style of the great poet. None before Manbodha showed enough courage to make a departure from the beaten track. The credit of innovation goes to Manbodha alone. He liberated Maithili poetry from the bondage of lyricism and brought it to the new path of narrative poetry i.e. Prabandha Kavya. Manbodha's example was later followed by Chanda Jha. On the basis of *Mithila Bhasha Ramayana* and *Chandra Padyavali* Chanda Jha is considered to be the pioneer of modern Maithili literature. Though there were many poets after Chanda Jha, the singular credit of widening the scope and diversifying the forms of Maithili poetry goes to Sitaram Jha alone.

Sitaram Jha did not only enrich the classical trends of Maithili poetry but also added new dimensions to it. With his varied and various poetic contributions the Maithili landscape suddenly undergoes a scenic transformation.

In order to understand the personality and work of Sitaram Jha it is necessary to know a little about his life. Born in 1891 Sitaram lived up to the ripe age of eighty-four. During this long span he was not only a witness to, but also the cause and creator of many a literary event in Maithili. Though professionally engaged in astrological studies, commissioned writings on astrological topics and research works connected with them, he was all the while deeply devoted to the cause of Maithili literature. He had hardly any time to think about writing an autobiography, or probably he felt no urge for it. It may be observed that in the works of ancient scholars whereas the subject matter is given an exhaustive treatment there are few references to the lives of the authors themselves.

Therefore determination of their biodata becomes difficult. Although the same cannot be said about Sitaram Jha, the authentic details of the important events of his life are difficult to be chronologically collated. These details while giving us a glimpse of the society contemporary to the poet would also have helped us in analysing his poetry. If at all the poet were to write his autobiography it would have surely become an authentic history highlighting the socio-cultural and literary trends of his time. But destiny had it otherwise. On the basis of what the poet has, here and there, said about himself, and the reminiscences about him presented by his near and dear ones, an effort has been made here to piece together a brief sketch of his life.

Birth and Family

There is no common agreement about the date of birth of Kavivar Sitaram Jha. His work *Maithili Kavyopavana* published during his life-time mentions, in course of his brief life-sketch, that he was born on Wednesday, 'Tritiya Tithi' of 'Magh Krishna', 'Vikram Samvat' 1947, that is, on January 5, 1891. But Dr. Suryanarayan Choudhary, while throwing light on his life, writes in the very beginning of his research work, *A Critical study of the Maithili Writings of Sitaram Jha'* :

"Kavivar Sitaram Jha was born on Wednesday, the fourth 'Tithi' of 'Magh Krishna' of 1928 'Sal', 'Vikram Samvat' 1947"

He has also specified the hour of his birth more clearly in the footnote :

"Fasli year 'San' 1928, 'Vikram Samvat' 1947, 'Magh Krishna Chaturthi Tithi,' that is, Wednesday, 'Purva Phalguni Nakshatra,' 'Chaturtha Charan', 24 'Ghari', 15 'Pal' ; accordingly 2.30 P.M."

The almanac, however, shows that Wednesday did not fall on the 5th January 1891, but on the 16th. At the time of sunrise that day it was 'Tritiya Tithi' in the hour of the poet's birth. Hence it can be undoubtedly asserted that Kavivar saw the light of the day on January 16, 1891.

He was born in his paternal village Chougama situated adjacent to the headquarters of the Benipur subdivision in the Darbhanga district. He was of 'Belouche Sudai' origin ('Mool') and a Brahman of 'Bharadwaj Gotra'. His father's name was Bachharan Jha and his mother's Janaki Devi. One of his ancestors, the father of his great great grandfather, Bhola Jha settled at his maternal place ('Matrika') *Chougama itself and since then his ancestors became the*

residents of this very village. The youngest of the five children of his father, he had two elder brothers and two elder sisters. The eldest of the brothers was Ram Prasad Jha, followed by his sister Saraswati Devi, who again was followed by his brother Suryanarayan Jha and then his sister Maya Devi.

Childhood and Education

When Sitaram Jha was only two years old he was deprived of the care of his father. Consequently the responsibility of bringing him up fell on the shoulders of his mother and two elder brothers. The family having but a small property, he could not continue to stay in the village. Most of his time he lived at his maternal place, Sahora. It was there that his 'Mundan' and 'Upanayan' rites were performed.

His education began with the learning of alphabet from the early age of four. Meritorious as he was from the beginning, he had, in spite of his adverse circumstances, great zeal for learning. He took a keen interest in it. He was admitted to class two of the Majhoura Primary School. He passed the upper primary examination in the first division from that school.

After passing that examination his studies owing to financial stringency were discontinued. He started teaching some children at his village and earned something in this way. Intelligent as he was, he had, in addition, an excellent capacity for teaching with zeal and dedication. Impressed by this, some people wanted to see him appointed a teacher. Some even tried for it, but at that time he had not come of age.

This initial hindrance made him vow to be a teacher. The future proved his determination and up to the last breath he remained a teacher.

After completing the "upper class" he evinced keen interest in the study of Sanskrit which he learned at the feet of Pandit Kapileshwar Jha of Jarison. He passed the Prathama Examination of Jyotish in the first division from the Sanskrit School, Jarison. Thereafter, he studied at the feet of Pandit Shri Nandan Jha of the Kanhouli village at Lohana School securing a first division in the Madhyama Examination of Jyotish.

After passing the Madhyama Examination he moved to Banaras to receive higher education. Financial aid came from Udit Narayan Choudhary of Nehara. At Banaras he developed a strong thirst for knowledge and got ample opportunity to satisfy it. He made full use of the opportunity by seriously applying himself to the study of

Jyotish. He became the disciple of the only Maithil astrologer Maha Mahopadhyaya Pandit Muralidhar Jha. He lived like a member of his family which helped him in delving deeper into the knowledge of Jyotish. Maha Mahopadhyaya was not only an erudite scholar of Jyotish, but also a litterateur and a journalist of Maithili. Sitaram Jha also acquired from this teacher a love for his mother-tongue and inspired by him dedicated himself to the task of enriching Maithili.

Besides studying Jyotish under M.M.Muralidhar Jha, he also studied literature under Maha Mahopadhyaya Devi Prasad Shukla. Shuklaji weilded great influence over him. He secured the degrees of 'Jyotishacharya' and 'Kavyatirtha' from the Calcutta University as a private student and afterwards passed the Shastri and Acharya Examinations of the Government Sanskrit College of Banaras. He also secured the first position in the difficult and much esteemed examination, Dhout Pariksha, in 1915.

Marriage and Children

Married in 1907 at the age of sixteen, his wife was Ijotamani Devi, the daughter of Devidutta Jha of 'Baliasaya Dharoura' origin and 'Kashyapa Gotra,' belonging to Shubhankarpur near Bhawanipur. Three sons were born to them, Janardan Jha 'Parakhi', Rup Narayan Jha 'Rakesh' and Vishwanath Jha 'Vishapayi' and a daughter Jagatarini Devi. Living a blessed conjugal life for fifty years, his wife left him for her heavenly abode in 1957.

Titles and Honours

The poet was honoured with many a title and tribute for the distinguished services rendered by him to Jyotish and Maithili language.

He was honoured with the title of *Kavivar* which became part and parcel of his name. Other honours included the title of *Maithili Sahitya Ratna* conferred to him by Mithila Mitra of Sultanganj, the title of *Kavi Samrat* by the Mithila Mihir family, the title of *Sahityacharya* from the Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad, Patna and the title of *Sahitya Ratna* from the Maithili Samsthan, Patna.

In the Maithili Conference organised by Maithili Academy, Prayag he was made the honorary head of the department of Dharmashastra and, besides being conferred upon with the title of 'Dharma Viveka Varenya', was also honoured with 'Pattavastra' and an order of merit.

Lal Bahadur Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Delhi bestowed upon him an award and the 'Pattavastra' for his learned speech on the subject of Jyotish.

The 'Givarnavagvardhini Sabha' of Sangaved Vidyalaya of Banaras conferred upon him the distinguished title of 'Jyotish Ratnakara.'

Teaching

The poet had taken a vow to adopt the vocation of teaching in his boyhood. Accordingly he fulfilled his vow. After finishing his studies, he adorned the post of Jyotish teacher at Sanyasi Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya of Banaras from 1921 to 1962. considering his reputation as a teacher and his profound erudition in Jyotish, Banaras Sanskrit University offered him professorship which post he occupied for the rest of his life.

Death

Sitaram Jha passed away on 15 June, 1975. Though age had told upon him, he remained active till the end. He taught his disciples even in the night previous to his death.

Personality

Kavivar Sitaram Jha was a scholar of the school of the ancient style of Sanskrit learing of Mithila. Thin of body and dark of complexion, he possessed a vivacious personality. A staunch upholder of Maithil culture, he always dressed himself in 'dhoti', 'touni', 'mirjai', 'pag', and invariably carried a walking stick. His broad forehead was never without a shining 'tripunda' and sandal paste. He was a Brahman devotee who performed 'Sandhya', worship and 'Japa' regularly. Sweet-natured as he was, he always preferred pun and humour in his talks. But he was staunch in his views. In scholarly discussions he would readily agree to the views of his counterpart if he thought those proper, but in case of difference of opinion he would challenge any scholar in support of his view.

Astrology was the main prop of his profession and he devoted his whole life to its pursuit. In course of his studies and teaching he always maintained an exploratory approach, such as writing books on the subject, bringing out his commentaries on reference books of esoteric nature and publishing articles and notes. His assumptions in astrology were not always in tune with those of other astrologers of Mithila. Consequently disputes would very often arise between him

and others. He would silence many a scholar during debates with his spirited arguments. So firm was his faith in his own views that while challenging his opponent, he would even put the other's knowledge into question. This unwavering faith in his own views was born of his great scholarship of Jyotish. On the concept of 'Atichar' he continued to differ with the Maithil astrologers till the end of his life and never accepted defeat. His strong-mindedness sometimes crossed the limit of tolerance. These qualities of self-dignity, a capacity for tireless endeavour and an invincible self-confidence were deeply rooted in his nature.

Poetic Talent and Drive

Kavivar had a natural gift for poetry. Even while he was a mere boy, his poetic genius began to bloom. In this connection he himself says :

"As many times as I read the *Mithila Bhasha Ramayana* and the *Rama Charitamanas* of Tulsidas in my boyhood, I liked to recite them by substituting their words and lines with my own. Sometimes I would succeed in recomposing the lines according to my choice and then would recite them. Now do I understand that my poetic sensibility had manifested itself at that very stage."

("O Je Kahalani"—*Sri Hansaraj,* p. 46)

Later on he chiselled his poetic talent still more through practice. Even his letters used to be in verse and verse again was used in his conversations even with his class mates.

That he utilized his poetic talents for Maithili alone is surely a matter of pride for this literature. His dedication to his mother-tongue and his vow to write only in Maithili are proofs of his unflinching faith in his mother-tongue. For this he drew inspiration from an incident in Calcutta.

Although he had started writing in 1913 itself, at that time, however, the spirit of dedication to his mother-tongue had not been born in him. Besides Maithili, he was also writing in Rashtrabhasha (Hindi) and Devabhasha (Sanskrit)

He had to go to Calcutta at that time very often. The love of the Bengalis for their mother-tongue highly inflamed him. In fact it was this zeal of the Bengalis for their mother-tongue that left an indelible imprint on his mind urging him to render

single-minded service to his own mother-tongue. He narrates at a place :

"When in 1915 I passed the Title Examination of Bihar and arrived in Calcutta, I found how deep was the Bengalis' love for their mother-tongue and how vast was their respect and pride for it. I would like to narrate an incident. One day I saw that there was a big congregation and the governor had also graced the occasion. He was an Englishman not knowing the Bengali language. But see, how the Bengalis respected their mother-tongue—they just forced him to speak in Bengali. When the governor began to deliver his tutored speech in stammering Bengali my love for my own mother-tongue got inflamed."

Five or six years after the aforementioned incident of Calcutta there was one similar incident at Banaras, after which he totally gave up writing verse in Hindi. A highly popular item in the poets' conference those days used to be the 'Samasyapurti.' A line of verse was to be projected to form a full poem in one's own style. In order to instil a sense of competition some prizes were also given. Narrating an incident of the same type Kavivar says :—

"It is an incident of 1920-21. I had been living at Banaras those days. There was a poets' conference in Hindi. The poets were given a line of verse, i.e. 'Samasya' and each completed it in his own style. I was also one of the participants. Although my composition even won a prize, I was, at the same time, put to much painful criticism for a grammatical error in Hindi. This pained me so much that I was full of reaction against the Hindi language. Since then I started writing poems in my mother-tongue alone."

Both these incidents illuminate the strength of his character. The incident of the Bengali community compelling even an English governor to speak in Bangala had enkindled in him a fanatic love for his mother-tongue. The bitter censure of his grammatical error in Hindi by the Hindi speaking men had brought about a disillusionment in his mind. Had he not witnessed that incident in Calcutta he would not have developed such a deep attachment for his mother-tongue. Similarly, if he had not undergone an experience like that at Banaras even other languages would have claimed his time which he was later to devote to Maithili alone . Since firmness of decision was a marked trait of his character he never wavered from his stand. So his firmness, even if excessive, proved beneficial for Maithili.

But he did not write any the less in Hindi and Sanskrit. All his works on Jyotish are either in Hindi or in Sanskrit, and seldom in Maithili. His professional interest was in astrology alone because that alone was to serve as a means of his livelihood. He adopted the Rashtrabhasha (Hindi) as a medium for his profession which was only necessary and justified. He was working as a teacher at Banaras where the mother-tongue of most of his students was a language other than Maithili. How could he have written books on astrological science in Maithili for those students ? So he was compelled to write such books in Hindi and that medium assured for him a wide reputation for his scholarship.

Literature was by no means, a profession for him. He used it just for offering his heart's outpourings in the service of his mother-tongue. "Mother and motherland are still more glorious than heaven" was his supreme motto. Kavivar treated his mother-tongue with the same respect as one would his mother and motherland, acknowledging an equal value to each in this way :

The trio—mother, motherland
and mother-tongue
Are the world's essence,
So the wise have sung!

The poetry of Kavivar glorifies itself by glorifying mother, motherland and mother-tongue.

As proof of his professional competence he wrote books on astrological science after a thorough study, research and analysis of the subject. In the field of astrology he is credited with establishing some new concepts by trying to refute the old ones, but what he did for Maithili was different. Here he was impelled with a sense of duty towards his mother-tongue. To write in one's language with dedication is one thing, but to write with a view to enrich the impoverished state of one's language is another. A genius performs this second task even while carrying out the first one itself.

The writings of Kavivar went a long way in accomplishing this second task also. However, the primary object of his writing remained but to render service to his mother-tongue.

As he could not devote full time to Maithili alone, there is not a single fat volume to his credit. Though he weilded his pen for a long period of sixty years and possessed the brilliant talent for instant poetic composition, his meagre literary output in Maithili is not commensurate with his kind of poetic genius. But even this small

output was of high literary value and importance, which deeply inspired the contemporary community of poets. It gave a sudden boost to the Maithili poetry from the viewpoint of popularity. But still more remarkable was his rock-like personality which neither gave way nor accepted any defeat for his mother tongue. He kept the lamp of his love for Maithili burning even in the wake of the high popularity of Hindi. In the very fortress of Bharatendu, Premachand and Prasad he went on enriching his vernacular Maithili.

Kavivar was a devotee. The major portion of his life was spent at Banaras, the central place of pilgrimage in this land and the glory of Lord Vishwanath and the Ganga have been a coveted theme of prayer and hymn for poets throughout the Puranas. Kavivar was also a dedicated devotee of Lord Vishwanatha and a worshipper of His selfless bountifulness :

So erratic are all His actions,
Yet who is to check Him ?
So frenzied is He of temper,
Yet who dares to ask Him ?
Well satisfied with the offer
Of mere four grains of rice,
He overflows one's coffer with
Milk, curd and gems in a trice !
Happy with a palmful of water
And 'Bam Bam Har' singing,
He can grant three worlds' dominion
Though Himself may go begging !
He verily rules the cosmos
Absolute and all independent !
He is Lord Mahadeva
And I am His humble servant !!

At Kashi he had his daily ablutions in the Ganga, counting himself blessed to have the nearness of Her sin-washing waters. His funeral rites were performed on the very bank of the Ganga there. He sings of the Ganga's glory thus :

So long as the Ganga flows here
Attachment and detatchment are but even !
Whether one indulges in sins or virtues
Both ways one is bound to attain Heaven !!
What was even beyond the reach of celestials
And was earned by endless penance,

Has now become at the banks of the Ganga
All simple, trash and nonsense !

Among the earthly mortals he was devoted to the Maharaja of Mithila. Right from Vidyapati up to the early modern age the poets and writers have been enjoying the patronage of kings and princes. Scholars, poets and artists have always crowded the royal courts. For their maintenance they have depended on the benevolence of the rich. Hence it was natural that the poet should sing the praise of kings. Though Kavivar Sitaram Jha was not a court poet he also sought the favour and patronage of the rich. This must have been the reason for him to mention and eulogize the 'Rajas' in his poetry. In those days loyalty to the ruler was looked upon as 'dharma' for lesser mortals. So it is no wonder that Kavivar's muse waxes eloquent in praise of the Maharajadhiraj of Mithila. One of the points in the nine-point programme of the Maithil Mahasabha was also loyalty to be shown to the King of Mithila. But in spite of his wish to remain "in the cool shade of the all granting mercy-tree (Kalpataru) of Mithilesh" he had also an ardent desire to be in the service of his motherland. Like other poets of the past not all his poetic creations bear the unmistakable stamp of loyalty to the Mithilesh except perhaps his *Alankara Darpana*.

As a teacher it had become almost his second nature to give sermons to his disciples. This trait is evident throughout his writings. One of the main objects of his poetry was to direct his Maithil community to the proper path. So everywhere he assumes the role of a preacher.

Kavivar was a reformist. While being an ardent upholder of Maithil culture, he always opposed what he thought to be a distortion of it. His zeal for social reforms is seen surging through all his poetic works. *Unata Basat* and the inspiration behind it amply illustrate his reformistic zeal.

Though Kavivar could not write his autobiography, he surely mentions some significant events of his life here and there and these bring out his personality. He has jotted in detail the events leading to the composition of *Unata Basat* in his article entitled 'Jeevan Kram' published in the *Mithila Mihir* of October 28, 1962.

The story in short is this. One Summer Kavivar left Kashi for his village home. There one day just when he had sat down to eat his meal it started to rain. Only then did he come to know that the entire roof over him was leaking. His wife told him that for the last

two years the thatched roof had ramained unrepaired for want of labour. His wife was not ready to get the roof thatched by untouchables, because, in her view, it would defile all the household articles. Kavivar argued as to how one who would work on the roof could bring about the pollution of articles inside the house. But his wife rejected Kavivar's logic on the ground of Maithil convention. The poet was both astonished and infuriated at this improper tradition of Mithila. He convened a meeting of the villagers and put the question to them and told them that the 'shastras' (sacred books of law) regarded the dog as the most unholy of all creatures, but if it touched a pot, they never threw it away for that. How could then a human being defile an article even when he did not touch it ? Though none was able to give a proper reply to Kavivar's argument, his contention was not preferred. Disgruntled at this, the poet started writing *Unata Basat* from that very day. He wrote :

A dog is the most defiled of all creatures,
So declare our 'Shastras' and scriptures :
But we pet it warmly as our children
And let it come right into the kitchen !
It freely smells our pots and other objects,
Leaves its faeces all over our precincts,
It licks our ears, forehead and all,
Doesn't then the curse of pollution befall ?
But if humans, born of our body,
Halkhor, *Dom*, *Musahar* or the tribals hilly
Step on our door or touch our terrace,
It defiles all things within our home-space,
We throw everything away and totally refuse,
Scold them with words of direct abuse.
What can be more suicidal than this action !
Today the wind is blowing in anti-direction !

While attacking some wrong and orthdox conventions of Mithila, this composition of the poet did not only uphold the cause of human dignity but also blasted the very basis of untouchability practised in our society.

At this time of his rise as a poet Mithila had fallen into the evil custom of child-marriage. Kavivar could not countenance this social evil of Mithila. Attacking the convention he enumerated the factors responsible for such an evil custom . He also expressed his anxiety

over the degeneration of human values in a land of such cultural glory.

This child-marriage has made us all
As if we were visited by ghosts :
None of us do mind our business, as though,
We were all illiterate hosts :
We keep on moving here and there for nothing.
We look lost and distracted of mind
Our anger flashes from the nose-tip, as if,
We were of the jackal-bitten kind !

Though not in favour of giving unlicensed liberty to women he was dead against the purdah-system. In his age, out of modesty women could under no circumstance talk with their husbands in the presence of other people.

A woman could not run to give succour to her husband even if some danger had befallen him. In Kavivar's view this was most unnatural. A reminiscence of Kavivar entitled 'Appan Sunal Gappa' was published in the monthly *Swadesh* in the column of 'Nari Samsar'. Therein the poet has given vent to his sense of the changing situation through a dialogue between women of two different generations. An excerpt from it is given below :

"The eighth lady, 'O sister, if you seek the decorum of your time these days, say, where will you find it ? one whole year had passed since the Dviragaman of Chunchun Babu. His eighty year old and disabled mother still served food to her son herself and fed him too. One day when Chunchun Babu was back from his paddy field, he slipped and fell flat on his mossy court-yard. He passed out. Mother saw it and shouted at her daughter-in-law, 'Hurry up, O Bahurmani, help my son ! ' But her cry was in vain ; Bahurmani could not venture out because of the barrier of purdah."

"A young lady interrupted in the middle, 'What a shame ! She should have run to her husband to help him" !

(*Swadesh*, First Year Number 5)

By getting outmoded customs thus censured by a spokesman of the modern age, Kavivar indicated that he did not favour purdah. No doubt he regarded 'modesty' as an ornament for women, but when the same thing became an evil, he vehemently opposed it. The

example makes it perfectly clear that our poet was in favour of reform.

As he had made study and teaching the main object of his life, he did not keep himself in touch with the politics of the country. But he was opposed to the British rule and supported 'swaraj', even though he had no interest in politics.

However, this political disinterestedness on his part was over by 1962. The Chinese attack roused his consciousness as it did in the case of other litterateurs of the nation and with his patriotic poems he exhorted his countrymen to fight the enemy with courage :

Brave youth, now take up bow and arrow,
The enemies on high borders rush below :
Defying even death, adopt a new strategy,
Don't befriend the wicked, shun this policy
If the enemy forces you, smash him and shatter ;
Crossing into his land even mountains batter :
If he looks at you, gouge out his eyes,
Storming Chou-en-lai's fortress, blow it to skies !

Kavivar's pen roared in the similar fashion at Pak attack.

This proves that though Kavivar kept himself scrupulously aloof from the contemporary political events, his patriotic feelings were deeply aroused whenever our country's security was threatened. Thus it is obvious that Kavivar was an ardent nationalist and a patriot at heart. This is proved beyond doubt that he had an ardent national spirit.

He was so busy with the study and teaching of astrology that he did have little time to read the contemporary literature of Maithili. Owing to insurmountable difficulties very few books in Maithili could be published in those days. The few which saw the light of the day saw it in the region of Mithila alone. Most of the time Kavivar lived at Banaras away from Mithila, so he could not keep himself abreast with the literary activities of Maithili. Partly on account of his engagement with other subjects and partly because of the non-availability of the latest publications in Maithili, Kavivar had developed the habit of devoting time to his own creative writings in Maithili. When he could not read even the contemporary Maithili literature, it does not appear probable that he would have had the urge to read the literatures of other Indian languages. Obviously, therefore, his poetry fails to keep pace with the contemporary

literature of some of the advanced languages of India. However, this was the case not only with him alone, but, generally, with almost all the writers of that period.

That he admitted his ignorance of the contemporary literature shows his quality of downright frankness and truthfulness in speech. This frank admission of ignorance was an essential part of his personality. The virtue of truthfulness was one of the marked features of his personality. Lucidity of speech, thought and language is regarded as the distinguishing quality of Kavivar's writings. This is illustrated by these lines :

Our ancestors, rising early at dawn,
Observed the six rituals correctly ;
They spent their days and nights
Pursuing acts of goodness perfectly
Whereas we, rising still earlier,
Come out of our home but secretly
And, alas, mounted on buffaloes,
We get others' fields grazed most wickedly !

The young man of today, riding a buffalo, gets others' fields grazed. The ambiguous implications of these lines are very instructive. 'Buffalo' here stands for 'ignorance'. 'Mounted on buffaloes' means 'we are steeped in dismal ignorance' and in such ignorance we get others' crop-laden fields grazed ; that is to say, we do not feel pride in cultivating our own literature, but exult in misappropriating others' mature crops. In other words, we excel in plagiarizing. Here the poet is dealing a severe blow to the tendency of blind imitation of others' language, culture and literature. He had a deep aversion to plagiarism and imitation of any kind and, he, probably looked upon the modern contemporary literature as being nothing else than the product of plagiarism. Hence he showed little interest in what was being written by others.

The poetic garlands Kavivar offered in devotion to his mother language were not made of the flowers from others' garden, but from the blossoms of the poetic garden of his own rich sensibility. The garland with which he bedecked Maithili has not only enhanced the beauty of Maithili, but also animated the entire Maithili atmosphere with the native fragrance of his original compositions.

Inspiration for Poetic Creation

The age in which Kavivar Sitaram Jha started writing poetry was one of renaissance, social upheaval, the upsurge of patriotic feelings and of dedication to motherland and mother-tongue in the country. Though the foundation of his creative activity was laid in the beginning of the twentieth century itself, the atmosphere of the time was still pervaded with the effects of the happenings and events of the last lap of the nineteenth century.

At the turn of the century a new awakening among the large masses of people in the country, especially in West Bengal, was just taking place. The overriding elements of the new wave were that of nationalism and patriotism. The whole of Bengal was astir. As Bihar also was then a part of Bengal it could not remain aloof. Calcutta, being the metropolis, was the fountain-source of all the political, educational and social upheavals in the region. It became the focal point of nationalist movement. As Calcutta was the central capital even of Mithila, those movements directly influenced also Tirhut (i.e. Mithila). As a result, the people of this region also felt in their hearts a deep awakening of love for their country. Hence the people of Mithila also joined the mainstream of 'Swadeshi' movement. Bengal influenced Tirhut not only socially and politically but also in the field of literature. Maithili literature suddenly found a new orientation. In Bengali literature Bankim Chandra's *Anand Math* with its rousing patriotic song 'Bande Mataram' had brought about a deep surging patriotism in the hearts of the Bengalis. This single song had so much fired the imagination of the common man that there was a spate of such evocative songs of patriotic nature in the literature of other languages of the country. Thousands of songs were sung in different languages, in different regions and different styles moving people emotionally and to become devoted to the cause of the motherland. It called upon our young people to sacrifice their lives for the liberation of their motherland. How could neighbouring Mithila remain immune to this fever of adoration for the motherland, which right from Bengal had taken the whole of India in

its stride ? Poets of Mithila who had composed only devotional and amorous poems so far, now turned their pen to writing patriotic poems. This patriotic fervour had also aroused in the men of this region a new found love for Maithili. Maithili literature saw a sort of new awakening with themes in favour of social reforms.

When in 1905 Bihar was partitioned from Bengal, it influenced not only these two regions, but also the whole of the nation. The partition movement of Bengal had wider repurcussions throughout the country leaving an impact on the language and literature of these two regions.

In the field of education an important step was taken in the direction of awakening the feeling of 'Swadeshi' in the Calcutta University under the leadership of Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee. The teaching of different languages was inaugurated in this university under his stewardship. Maithili also, for the first time, got a place in the university curriculum as an independent language.

This was the period when the independence movement began to rock the entire nation. The immortal slogan of Lokamanya Tilak, "Freedom is our birthright", began to reverberate like a strident call throughout the nation. It was but natural for this patriotic movement to spread up to Mithila like a wild fire. The dream of having a government of our own as also the freedom to express ourselves in our own mother-tongues had also inspired Maithili litterateurs to enrich their own literature. They now began to miss the absence of a magazine in their own language. Thus, the first magazine in Maithili, called *Maithili Hitasadhana* , began to be published. In the following year *Mithila Moda* also saw the light of publication. Only after a brief interval the third periodical *Mithila Mihir* was started. The litterateurs of the time unitedly started giving a call to one and all to serve and enrich their mother-tongue.

The partition of Bengal, the national struggle for independence, a new consciousness to serve the motherland and the mother-tongue, a revolutionary transformation in the contents of literature, publication of different magazines and periodicals aiming at social awakening—all these factors had naturally a cumulative effect on Sitaram Jha. Hence his poetry, contrary to those of his predecessors, became wider in range and variety and incorporated all the elements of social change and culture. The very ethos of the times was such as could not let any litterateur ignore this new-found love for motherland and mother-tongue.

It was only when the poets of Maithili turned their attention to this aspect that they became aware of the extent to which their mother-tongue was lagging behind and their motherland was neglected. In order to rouse the spirit of the people it was necessary to acquaint the regional society with the degradation of their land and language. Hence, the two main themes of the poetry of that time were the degeneration of Mithila and the neglect of Maithili. It was the conviction of the poets that until the Maithil community had the awareness of their own degradation, they could not be inspired with the urge to uplift their land and language. It was a fact that the glory of Mithila had declined. The need, therefore, was to make people of this region conscious of its past glory. The reason for the decline lay in idleness, ignorance and the feeling of malice against each other. People had little love for their mother-tongue which to a great extent obstructed the progress of this region. The poets of the period exposed the evils of the society and called upon the people to contribute their mite to the task of serving the country by enriching their mother-tongue.

In order to understand the changed trends of the period it is necessary to examine the poetry of other poets of this period.

In his poem entitled 'Jeevan Saphalya' the poet Yadunath Jha 'Yaduvar', while urging the Maithil society to liberate their motherland, also tries to drive home the fact that no other ideal is greater in life than to be of some use to the motherland :

One whose eternal lesson
Is to serve one's motherland
Marches from victory to victory
With achievements bold and grand !
Those who do not turn back,
However great be the obstructive power,
But fight for their country
At the opportune hour :
Those who are ever firm and disciplined
Brave and all sacrificing
Are alone blessed and fruitful
The rest are but self-disgracing !

Going into the causes of the decline of Maithili literature and society Kavivar realised that the main cause for this sorry state of affairs lay

in our lack of love for our script and language. This is the burden of his poem 'Matribhasha' which rendered in prose will mean :

Today the condition of Maithil society is abysmally low. It is so because our language and script have long remained neglected.

By adopting proper tongue and costume
A land is really glorified
All troubles vanish and
Its culture and independence get fortified !
One who holds dear and sacred
One's land, tongue and race
Remains supreme in wisdom
And shines in ethical grace !

Similarly Chhedi Jha 'Madhup' gives a clarion call to the youth to serve the nation in his poem 'Udbodhan' :

O Maithil brothers,
Dwellers of Mithila, all !
Open your eyes and shun
Pleasures at my call !
Long as you have slumbered
Even now but awake !
Revive your land or perish
Either of the ways take !
If you curb your jealousy and malice
Your deceit and evil passion
Maithili is sure to bestow on Tirhut
Her infinite compassion !

In the same manner alluding to the disgrace perpetrated on Maithili by others, he tries to fire the Maithil minds with a sense of pride for their language through the poem 'Matribhasha' :

Many cast on you
A look of mere derision,
Still this does not strike in you
A bit of self-realisation !
Who cares in the world
What you have to say ?

Do you have any pride
For your mother tongue, pray ?
It's your selfishness alone
Which as your help you suppose :
Say, do you even give ear
To Maithili's woes ?
Your mother tongue is a victim—
Fallen to untold misery !
Ah ! of your own words and your birth
So ignorant you be !

Drawing the attention of his society towards the sweetness of Maithili language Munshi Raghunandan Das says :

Sweeter than honey,
More palatable than nectar
In its extent of virtues
Nothing can be ever greater
What else can really be
Like our mother language !
Let it be a point
Of thy perpetual reflection and knowledge
Whether in audition or utterance
It is so sweet and charming
A Tongue which even in dream
Gives no occasion for any misunderstanding.

All the emotions mentioned above were very strongly present in Kavivar Sitaram Jha and he gave expression to them in such a fluent and effective language that it churned the reader's heart.

In addition to the impact of his times on him, he met with such a congenial atmosphere that poetry virtually flowed from his pen. After finishing his early education he went to Banaras and was blessed in getting a guru like Maha Mahopadhyaya Muralidhar Jha. Fortunately Muralidhar Jha had also an ardent love for Maithili. Cherishing a desire for an all-round development of Maithili language Muralidhar Jha made it a cause celebre to awaken the slumbering Maithil society from its cultural stupor. He realised that in order to create writers it was necessary to start the publication of a magazine in the language. The inertia of Maithil society caused by a long lack of political and cultural pride could not be shaken off by

any stray or half-hearted call. He realised that, unless a united call from a thousand throats rent the air, Maithils would not come out of their cultural languor. This caused Muralidhar Jha to start publishing the monthly joural *Mithila Moda*. With its help a group of litterateurs gradually grew all of whom were charged with the task of awakening the Maithil masses. Almost all the litterateurs of the age were thus the creations of *Mithila Moda*. The seed of poetry in Sitaram Jha at once sprouted as soon as it found a congenial soil. Maha Mahopadhyaya Muralidhar Jha was a writer of refined prose. He excelled at couching plain ideas in plain words in a touching manner. Since some plain speaking was necessary, language, he realised, had to be simple i.e. shorn of all figures of speech. His prose had flow, lucidity and appeal. Likewise he was not in favour of ornamentation in his poetry which only impeded communication for the common reader. Sitaram Jha appreciated this spirit of his master and started pouring out his heart in a charmingly refined language. It should be remembered that the credit for any refinement of language and the clarity of expression which we find in the poetry of Sitaram Jha goes to his teacher and guide Muralidhar Jha.

Banaras became, at that time, the centre from where the great task of awakening the slumbering consciousness of Mithila was undertaken. Thus, from that central position Sitaram Jha had no difficulty in collecting all the information about the trends of his time. He found a ready platform from where to exhort the Maithils through his poems. And he was immensely successful in this task in that the message of his poems was understood by his brethren.

In order to enkindle an inspiration for the uplift of a degenerated society great poets and litterateurs have to use more than one literary device. While the poet sings of the glorious past of Mithila, he also laments its present degeneration. In the same poem and in the same breath while he throws light on his society's idleness, illiteracy and backbiting tendeney, he also gives a stirring call to its members to realise that they had the same talent which had once made this region a land of rare cultural richness. If at times he points his finger at major social evils, he also attacks its outmoded customs with bitter satire. He does not hesitate to highlight the deeprooted evils of the Maithil society or point an accusing finger at its inferior ways. Sitaram Jha inspires, exhorts and mocks in one breath. Thus, ways may be different, but the goal is the same and that is to bring society to the path of progress. Society does not consist of people of uniform nature, hence to enlighten them in one

and the same way is out of question. The litterateur who has his fingers on the pulse of his society knows what words should be addressed to which class of people and at what opportune moment to produce the desired effect. This is the stuff a genuinely great and popular poet is made of. Judged by this criteria the excellence of Sitaram Jha's genius is at once proved.

Singing of the glory of Mithila and the mother-tongue Sitaram Jha says :

To the north lies Gouri's paternal home
To the south flows the Ganga, the washer of sins
To the west the Gandak, the destroyer of evils
To the east the Kosi's rule begins
Whose soil is softer than soft butter
Where water tastes like sweet ambrosia
Go and observe the three worlds :
You won't find a land like Mithila !

And then he laments its present degradation :

'It is a pity we have given a good-bye to all good sense, throwing our age-old tradition to the fore winds ! Torturing the poor is our joy and swaggering with this perishable body our boast. Our comradeship consists only in a daily meet for 'Bhang' or in carrying on a trade of false herbal medicine and doing such nonsensical things. All these we do, but never care to remember our saviour Ram !' (Prose-rendering)

Drawing our attention to the lethargy and ignorance of society, he says :

'While the study of the Vedas and scriptures was the daily pursuit of our ancestors, and attainment of light through meditation, penance and spiritual discipline their life's supreme goal, today we only revel in our ignorance and spend our days in an idle pastime like chess.' (Prose-rendering)

In order to rouse us from our dormant spirit and to bring us out of lethargy, he gives the call :

Dear brother, awake ! Why are you snorting ?
Why in slumber and sloth are you vainly rotting ?

Study the Vedas or go and just wrestle !
Why don't you exercise either your mind or your muscle·?

Even the educated held a disdainful attitude towards their mother-tongue. They were avoiding the use of Maithili even in their routine conversations. Afraid of what the future may hold for a cultural community taking no pride in its own mother-tongue, the poet directed his poetic fury at such people thus :

> 'How impelled sometimes I feel to box the ears or even cut out the tongue of those educated wretch who do not use their mother-tongue in daily discourse !' (Prose-rendering)

These few lines had a magical effect on the Maithil psyche. It began to be recited by the entire Maithil people and greatly helped in creating the desired effect of regenerating pride for the mother-tongue. The class of people who had discarded the use of mother-tongue now felt ashamed in not using it. Memorable lines like the above-mentioned ones of this poet have come to stay as the slogan of the Maithili speaking people.

It is necessary to examine the factors contributing to the apathy of the Maithils towards their mother-tongue. Because of the British rule at that time English was taught at schools right from standard one. The medium of instruction throughout the country was the regional language. The medium of instruction for the teaching of not only Enlgish but also of other subjects was again the mother-tongue itself. But unfortunately not a single language of Bihar was accorded approval as mother-tongue by the government. Hence Hindi was made a compulsory subject of study for children from primary classes in Bihar. Far from Maithili being taught as an independent language, it was never allowed the status of the medium of instruction in the Mithila region. Hence after learning their alphabet, the children of Mithila never had the opportunity to know that the mother-tongue had any use other than being the medium of conversation inside their houses. For those who opted for Sanskrit naturally had it as their medium of instruction. Consequently the students of both these categories went out of touch with Maithili. Under these circumstances, an impression was created that their language was not fit to be the medium of instruction. This is in nutshell the story of Maithils' indifference to their own tongue. Even

after attaining adulthood it was not possible for one to erase the impression so created in one's childhood.

As a result of Hindi being the medium of instruction at English schools the children of Mithila had to burden themselves with the task of learning an extra language. For the young learner of this region Hindi was as unfamiliar as English. At first the child had to learn the medium language itself through which he or she had to learn English. The child's mind got entangled in not fewer than three languages. As a result, it had no proper development and most of the pupils failed to grasp their subjects aptly. Kavivar pointed out this defect of the educational system very poetically :

> 'What an irony that you cram RAT only to find that it means CHUHA without Knowing what on earth this CHUHA is until your mother-tongue teaches you that it means but MUSARI (in Maithili)! This thus teaches us the lesson that we cannot ignore our mother tongue through which we learn other languages.'
>
> (Prose-rendering)

Because of the British rule Kavivar could not tell it openly that Maithili should be the medium of instruction for the proper development of the children of this region, but he proved it indirectly that the medium through which meaning of English words was put across to the children did not really belong to them. For them that language was as difficult to understand as English. Through the verse quoted above the poet, while attacking the prevailing educational system, also points out to the Maithil children the importance of the use of mother-tongue.

And he taught this lesson most elaborately. He instructed everyone in the manner he would best understand. If Kavivar had not given this gospel assuming the role of a powerful guide, then finding the mess in which Maithili was caught up, the plot which was being hatched to cut at the very root of its existence and the evil way in which the illusion was being created among the masses that Maithili was the language of the unlettered, it would not have been possible for this language to attain the level of development which it has done today.

Kavivar had given a stirring call in his versified presidential speech made at the poets' meet during the sixth session of Maithili Sahitya Parishad held at Muzaffarpur :

> 'It is the mother-tongue alone which first helps us in knowing the world and then gradually it builds up our faculty of pronouncing

alien words. How lovingly did our mother sing those nursery rhymes in her tongue to us in our childhood even while nursing us ! But if today the same mother-tongue becomes foreign to us, then take it for granted that we are heading towards absolute ruination.

Human as we are, we won't be able either to enjoy liberty and prosperity or to put up a brave fight against the inroads of our enemies, unless we play the man and stop disgracing our ancestors by playing a coward. Can we win our due without putting up a fight ? Can we ignite a match-stick without flicking ? One who forgets one's identity can command no respect whatever in the world. Should we behave like a circus-tiger who is taught to flee on seeing a mere goat ? Ours is the proud privilege of being born in mother Janaki's land and belonging to the glorious lineage of Yajnavalkya and King Janaka !

Who can compare with Maithil in talent, learning, wealth, valour and wisdom ?' (Prose-rendering)

The tremendous zeal as well as the magic spell of the poet's devotion to the mother-tongue which had stirred the slumbering soul of the Maithil society is proved by the fact that these lines still remain to be the guiding force behind the Maithili movement. Kavivar had actually awakened in every soul the pride of being born in 'Mother Janaki's land' !

Kavivar wrote profusely on the themes of mother-tongue and social reform just in tune with the ethos that he encountered at the beginning of his poetic career. His poems of this type gained immense popularity, became a driving force behind the literary movement of Maithili and succeeded in turning people's mind towards their mother-tongue. However his poetry did not only keep iself limited to the poems of exhortation alone, but also broke new grounds and incorporated within its compass a wide range of themes. 'Struggle' remains to be the chief note of his poetry—struggle between the old and new values, the native and foreign ideas. But some other notes as well have found expression in his poetic composition. Poems of amorous love, songs, verses projected on a single given line (Samasyapurti), proverbs, poetry dealing with poetics and astrology, narratives and epic written by him illustrate the wide scope of his content and form.

But the most striking aspect of Kavivar's poetry which draws our attention is not only the infinite variety of his poetic form and content but also his language. The lucidity, refinement, natural flow

and simplicity that his language reflects add to the beauty of his poetry. He would turn common speech into metric compositions with such ease that conservative Pundits of prosody were not convinced that these could be poetry at all. According to them, if poetry had no ambiguity, if it was not burdened with rhetorical flourishes, it could not be designated as poetry. That is why Kavivar's poetry appeared to them as mere 'rhymes'. They would make fun of his poetry and pass ironical remarks on it. What an irony it was that even such a litterateur whose writings irradiated new energy, new zeal and new awakening and were a source of unique delight for the common people had to face the ridicule of a section of society ! Vidyapati, who had met with the same fate earlier, retorted to those who held mother-tongue in contempt in this way :

Neither the new moon nor Vidyapati's language,
Can the wicked one by his taunt damage ;
For, the former bedecks Shiva's forehead radiant
And the latter does the common man's heart enchant !

In his vehement attack on those critics who called his *Sukti Sudha* mere 'rhymes', Kavivar also called them fools :

Those who place the cuckoo and the crow,
Or a tiger and a goat in the same row ;
Make no difference between a young lady and an old dame ;
For whom polished and unpolished rice be same ;
Who are such dullards as do estimate,
Silkworm and spider at equal rate—
What wonder it is if they find
Sukti Sudha and 'rhymes' of equal kind !

But those who called Kavivar's poetry mere 'rhymes' could not retain their courage for long. When they saw how Kavivar's poetry was being received with eclat from all quarters they shut their mouths.

His compositions came out in almost all the periodicals published during his sixty-three years of poetic career (1913—'75). In some of the earlier magazines his compositions were published almost continuously, nearly in all the numbers. But all that he wrote has not been collected at one place as yet. Even after his death this task remains unfulfilled up till now. The numbers of those magazines

in which his poetic compositions got published have become rare, thus making a study of all his poetic creations difficult. The dimensions of his poetry are so wide and the content of his works so diverse that no proper evaluation of his poetry could be made without the study of his entire poetic output. So, till all his prose and poetic works are collected at one place, we are obliged to limit our study only to those of his writings which are available at present.

The problem of collection exists only with regard to Kavivar's Maithili writings. All his Sanskrit and Hindi writings are however available in book form. His learning was so vast that he had to face no dearth of publishers in Sanskrit and Hindi for whatever he wrote on astrology. Publishers are a rare species and I am sad to relate that publishers in Maithili are harder to find. Imagine the dearth of publishers Kavivar must have had to face for publishing his writings in Maithili in those days. Whatever Kavivar got published in Maithili, he did it on his own and not at the request of any publisher. An increase in the number of magazines creates a corresponding growth in the creative activities of writers; likewise if publishers were ready, the number of books published in Maithili must have also increased.

The Maithili writings of Kavivar include both the forms—prose and poetry. But there is no separate collection of his literary writings in prose. As such, his prose writings are scattered, and that also rarely in the form of essays. They are mostly in the form of comments, letters addressed to editors and letters of complaint. Some are in the form of reminiscences and others as his submissions through preface written in one or two books. He has used prose in writing glossary to clarify his point at some places in *Alankara Darpana*. But he could not conclusively establish himself as a prose-writer.

There was, however, a continuous flow of poems from his pen which he maintained till the end of his life. One would, therefore, have expected many collections of poems but the truth is that there are only a few. The reasons for this have already been discussed above. Despite all this, he was the only poet of his time whose writings could be brought together even in such quantity. The present study would include even those poems which though not published in his books were published in the magazines and journals of the time.

His poetic writings consist of both original and translated works and they may be divided into three categories according to their respective genres :

1. Narrative Poems (Prabandha Kavya)
2. Descriptive Poems (Vivarnatmaka Kavya)
3. Independent Poetry (Muktaka Kavya)

In the first category, i.e. Prabandha Kavya, epic and narrative poetry will be studied. Kavivar's only epic is *Amba Charita* whose only the first part has been published. The other part could not be printed. Still the first part is complete by all the standards of epic. His other composition of this category is 'Vidurokta Upadeshamrita' which is narrative in character. It could not be published in book form, but was brought out serially in the Maithili journal *Mithila Moda*.

In the second category come those works of Kavivar which are mainly descriptive. They are *Bhukampa Varnana*, *Alsi-udyami Katha* and *Urmila Lakshamana*. Besides these, *Padhua Charitra Tatha Purvapara Vyavahara*, *Siksha Sudha* etc. may also be considered under this category by virtue of their descriptive nature. Some would like to treat these works as 'Independent Poems' (Muktaka Kavya), but compared with Kavivar's other independent compositions, these are larger and more sustained. In spite of the independent nature of each poem they are linked up with one another and each poem appears to evolve itself strictly according to its title. Hence the depictions of seasons should also be considered under this very category.

The third category of Kavivar's works is 'Muktaka' or 'Independent Verse'. A poetic composition which sums up its theme in one or more than one stanza is called 'Muktaka'. It may or may not have a title. The majority of thematic points favour *Sukti Sudha* to be classified under this very category. His *Parichaya Darpana* and *Lok-Lakshana* also come under this category. It will be more justified to apply the same classification to *Unata Basat* also. Besides these, several of Kavivar's poems dealing with the topical themes such as hymns glorifying different gods, poems of invocation and awakening, verses projected on given lines and those composed on proverbs may be listed under this category.

Maithili Kavya Khataras and *Maithili Kavyopavana* are two such collections of Kavivar's poems as may be classified both as Muktaka

(Independent Poems) and as 'Varnanatmaka' (Descriptive Poetry). Hence it will be improper to take the total lot of these collections as belonging to a single category. These poems will have to be separately considered under both the aforementioned categories.

From another point of view his poetry may also be classified in this manner :

(1) Poems based on classical principles
(2) Poems of Prosody and Independent Poetic Verses

Besides being an erudite scholar of astrology, Kavivar was highly learned in 'Karmakanda'. He had put into simple verse most of the much urgent astrological information as well as codes of many important religious rituals for the use of the common man. His poems of this type are:

(1) *Vyavahara Viveka Va Jatra Saguna Vichara*
(2) *Parva Nirnaya, and (3) Atichar Nirnaya.*

Besides these, *Yajnavalkya Smriti* and *Sankshipta Panchanga Vijnana* in verse may also be listed under this type. Although published serially in a journal, they have not as yet been printed in book form.

Kavivar also rendered *Shrimadbhagavadgita* into Maithili under the title *Gita Tattva Sudha*. This also belongs to the category of *Shastra*. However, this could be published in book form only up to the sixth canto.

Besides being an authority on astrology (Jyotisha) Kavivar was also well versed in Sanskrit literature. Poetics is regarded as the most complex part of literature. He has rendered the definition of rhetoric and poetic ornamentation ('Alankara' or Figures of Speech), regarded as the most difficult part of poetics, into natural and charming Maithili. Definitions and explanations along with illustrations of Alankara are published in two volumes of Maithili poetry under the title *Alankara Darpana*. The first part of this work deals with 'Shabdalankara' (Verbal figures of speech) and the second part with 'Arthalankara' (Figures of speech related to meaning).

Besides the above two books, there is one more composition related to the poetic grammar, *Maithili Chhandolankara Manjusha*.

This was also systematically brought out in a journal, but never came out in book form.

The first collection of Kavivar's poetic verses is *Padhua Charitra Tatha Purvapara Vyavahara* which is the first fruit of his poetic pursuit in published form. Following this he started a series of publications captioned *Sukti Sudha*. Five parts of this work are published. Each part is independent in itself. In addition to this series he also got four other books published. Thus, in total, ten of his books come under the category of 'poetic verse', as listed below :

1. *Padhua Charitra* Tatha Purvapara Vyavahara
2. *Ratna Sangraha* (Part one of Sukti Sudha)
3. *Loka Lakshana* (Part Two of Sukti Sudha)
4. *Upadeshakshamala* (Part Three of Sukti Sudha)
5. *Bhukampa Varnana* (Part Four of Sukti Sudha)
6. *Siksha Sudha* (Part Five of Sukti Sudha)
7. *Parichaya Darpana*
8. *Unata Basat*
9. *Maithili Kavya Khataras*
10. *Maithili Kavyopavana*

Over and above these, two of his other works were not published in the book form, but only serially brought out in a journal. They bear the titles—*Samaj*, *Dharma*, *Karttavya* and *Stri Siksha Par Paramarsha*. These two come under the genre, 'Champu Kavya' (work combining both prose and poetry).

Thus an endeavour has been made to classify the entire works of Kavivar collected or uncollected but published in journals. While making an independent study of all the aforementioned works the subject-matter, form and linguistic distinction of each will be discussed in the order—first, the works related to a particular 'Shastra' ; second, works of truly poetic nature ; third, the narrative works belonging to the category of 'Prabandha Kavya'.

A Survey of Kavivar's Works

Kavivar Sitaram Jha took to poetic compositions in Maithili driven mostly by a compulsive urge to serve his mother-tongue. His poetic talent was such that he could easily compose a poem on any subject of his choice. His speech found, as it were, a natural articulation only in poetry. So, on the one hand, if he wrote an epic, he also gave a charming poetic form to as prosaic a subject as astrology. Whereas his poetic verses at once arrest our mind by their liberalistic ardour, satirical sharpness, narrative verve, analytical manner and a spirit which exhorts, his poems related to particular branches of knowledge ('Shastras') captivate us by virtue of their excellent exposition of the subject. The natural case, grace and lucidity that appeared as distinctive quality in his very first composition, not only stayed with him till the last, but went on getting more and more refined in course of time. Whether it be epic or independent poetry or poetry related to poetics or astrology, this specific linguistic feature can be discerned everywhere in him. Thus, this striking quality of his language became the biggest single factor for his popularity. Even the most complex topic of a 'Shastra' would become so simplified at his hands that even the unlettered could grasp its meaning.

Vyavahar Viveka (Jatara Sagun Vichar)

In this work related to astrology and observance of ceremonies and rites Kavivar has presented in excellent simple verse those specific concepts of the 'Shastras' which are useful in our daily life. Mithila has been a land of religious people. It is, therefore, natural here that whenever people have wished to undertake to do a work, or set out for a place, or seek to perform a special ceremony, they have at first fixed an auspicious day and hour for it. As Sanskrit education has gradually waned, pundits having the knowledge of almanacs are getting fewer in number. Taking this specific situation into consideration Kavivar versified important topics in his mother-tongue in such a way that even those who were not conversant with

Sanskrit could understand the whole thing by themselves. This was what impelled the poet to write this book. Kavivar lucidly puts in verse the purpose of the work in the very beginning :

But those sayings of the sages
Are all in Sanskrit expressed,
The skill to utilize them
Is not by all the men possessed ;
So I write in our mother-tongue,
'Shrutis' and 'Shastras' following,
Auspicious moments for different occasions
With God Almighty's blessing !

Such efforts had been made in the Maithili language in former times also. For example, *Dak Vachanamrita* is still on the lips of the people. Sitaram Jha's verses may give us an illusion of Dak's voice. But the basic difference between the two is that while Dak's sayings analyse topics chiefly related to agriculture, most of Kavivar's observations are related to 'Dharma Shastra' and the knowledge regarding the auspiciousness of the time and hour for undertaking a job as per almanac.

The auspicious hour for starting on a journey has been elaborately dealt with in this book. Considering as to what the auspicious hour is for setting out on a journey in a particular direction Kavivar writes :

The dawn for east and the morning west :
The day north, for south the night is the best.

Conversely, he also considers as to which direction brings harm at what particular time :

West at dawn and east at morn :
South in the day, nightly north is evil-born.

Similarly he describes the objects prohibited at the time of starting a journey :

Shun oil on the day you start your journey :
So is shaving, wine, meat or quarrel contrary.

The practice of finding out the auspicious hour, superstitious as it is, is quite ancient. We can foresee whether a mission would be successful or not on the basis of objects seen at the start of a journey

or on the way. Kavivar has couched such age-old assumptions in beautiful verse. Even accepting the discipline of astrology, Kavivar appears to be in favour of some change in one's decisicns regarding the auspiciousness of the time and day of journey. He gives topmost priority to the value of time and the urgent nature of the work :

If you go and return just in a day,
The consideration of auspiciousness may be put away.
If at all your journey be most urgent,
You need not seek the astrologer's consent.

Changed as the times are, Kavivar has prohibited us from the exercise of consulting books of astrology or almanacs. He foresaw that, day by day, this custom will be on the decline. Hence he had himself granted concessions which certainly were in confirmity with his forward-looking attitude.

Parva Nirnaya

The book describes all the annual festivals celebrated in Mithila in their proper perspective. The poet has elaborately dealt with the proper time, importance, ceremonies and rites related to them, together with all their intellectual and practical aspects. Hence, it is a book concerning the observance of rites and ceremonies ('Karmakanda'). The scholars of 'Karmakanda' are getting fewer day by day. The festivals and ceremonies of Mithila may well disappear with them. It is in the perspective of this danger that Kavivar decided to versify this topic in view of the fact that the common man could hardly read Sanskrit in which the observance of all these festivals are exhaustively described. As such, by rendering such topics of the 'Shastras' into his mother-tongue and that also in delightful verse-form, Kavivar has done a great service to the less educated people, especially the women-folk. With regard to the utility of this work Kavivar has said :

Whatever festivals and 'Vratas'
Are current in the land,
I write about them here
As they in 'Shastras' stand.

All the festivals and celebrations observed during the twelve months between 'Chaitra' and 'Falguna' have been systematically

described here along with the guide-lines for observances and rites related to each. Although having no literary value of note, these have great practical importance. The language of this composition, like that in other works, is simple, natural and fluent.

Atichar Nirnaya

'Atichar' (Transgression of the stars) is a topic of astrology. During the period covered by 'Atichar' all sacred and religious rites are prescribed. At what particular time 'Atichar' falls, although defined in astrology, has always been a disputed subject among the astrologers. Kavivar Sitaram Jna had his own views on it which obviously differ with other astrologers of Mithila. Not a few times did he hold debate ('Shastrartha') on the point and published articles and comments. But disputes apart, Kavivar has very clearly dealt with the question as to how 'Atichar' ought to be defined, what its types are, and in what situation it has to be observed etc. according to the postulates of 'Shastras'. The book is not useful for the common people, but it is of special value for a student of astrology.

Yajnavalkya Smriti

Yajnavalkya Smriti is a Sanskrit classic. It is believed that the sage Yajnavalkya was a dweller of Mithila and his precepts had a great hold on the Maithil people. This book of his is very famous in Sanskrit. In as much as it has a peculiar importance for Mithila Kavivar wanted to translate it into Maithili. He even started the translation work. It was even published in the two old issues of the *Mithila Mihir* in parts, but for some reason or the other he could not complete it. So it could not come into book form.

Samkshipta Panchanga Vijnana

This composition of Kavivar is also related with astrology. Published in the *Mithila Moda* it could not be printed in book form.

Panchanaga or almanac is a book of calculations. According to Kavivar it is a science. Herein he throws light on certain important aspects connected with the making of an almanac. He was always worried about the errors committed by almanac-makers and he even published articles showing the harm likely to result from it. By writing *Samkshipta Panchang Vijnana*, while giving correct guidance to the almanac-makers, he also enables the common man to guard against defective almanacs. But this work too is more useful to specialists of astrology than to anyone else.

Gita Tattva Sudha

Kavivar has translated *Shrimad Bhagwadgita* into Maithili under the title *Gita Tattva Sudha*. It is a pity that out of eighteen cantos only six cantos could be written, all of which are published in book-form.

The Gita is regarded as the most profound work in the whole of Sanskrit literature. It is well nigh difficult to translate such an abstruse and difficult book. The portions translated by Kavivar strike one as successful in that while the original meaning is preserved the language of the verse is simple. The following lines illustrate the striking charm of the language as also the exact rendering of the sense :

It does not behove a warrior like you.
A disheartened Kshatriya is shameful to view
Hence, shunning cowardice, play the man
Arise and perform the chief duty as per plan !

If we compare these lines with the original text, it will become clear that the translation retains the flow and sense of the original :

Klaivyam masmagamah Partha
Naitattvayyupapadyate
Kshudram hridaya-dourvalyam
Tyaktvottisth Parantapa !

Hence its incompleteness must be considered as a misfortune for Maithili.

Alankara Darpana

Alankara Darpana is divided into two parts, each separate from the other. The first part deals with 'Shabdalankar' (Verbal figures of speech) and the second with 'Arthalankara' (Ornamentation or Figures of speech related to internal sense).

'Alankara' (Figures of speech) is the domain of Poetics (Grammar of Poetry). Besides being a poet, Kavivar was also an 'Acharya' (Professor). As such, this book demonstrates his great erudition. In order to compose poems one must be conversant with the knowledge of metre and figures of speech. With the writing of verse becoming popular in Maithili Kavivar felt that many versifiers were trying their hands at this medium without any knowledge of Poetics. It was keeping such people in view that the present work

was undertaken. Kavivar himself states in his preface to *Arthalankara*:

"Many gentlemen have taken to composing poems. Thinking that the knowledge of poetics, figures of speech, merits and demerits of poetry are necessary for an aspiring poet, I have written a book on versification entitled *Padyadarsha* according to the 'Sanskrit Pingala' (Verse-metre) and then *Alankara Darpana* according to *Sahitya Darpana* and *Kuvalayanand Sanskrit Alankara*, together with an elaborate treatment of 'Shabdalankara' and 'Arthalankara' in it."

Though Kavivar wrote this book as a guide book for nascent poets, it is useful even for those who do not concern themselves with verse-making because an abstruse subject like 'Alankara' is treated here in such an easy and interesting way that even those who do not have much taste for poetics can go through the book with interest and acquire some knowledge of the figures of speech. Those who have not the slightest interest in 'Alankara' are nonetheless delighted to read the book, for the verse-pieces composed here to illustrate the different figures of speech are so simple and charming that people would like to pursue the book even for the sheer joy of reading it. As the book deals with 'Alankara' according to the Sanskrit Poetics it cannot properly be called an original creation, still the verse illustrations of the figures of speech are so strikingly original, their poetic texture is so rich and the examples chosen are so thrillingly close to life that the work cannot but impress one as great poetry.

The first part of the book is dedicated to Maharaja Dr. Sir Kameshwar Singh :

This 'Alankara Darpana' I have made
For delight and elaborate knowledge !
May Maharaja Kameshwar Singh graciously
Adopt it and the poet encourage !

The second part is dedicated to Maharaja's younger brother Raja Bahadur Vishweshwar Singh :

May the brave Shrimad Vishweshwar Singh
Take it in his gracious lotus hands,
And may this serve as a mirror to his vision,
All the virtues as he excellently understands !

Kavivar must have put in all his poetic excellence in writing this book. Since he had decided to dedicate it to the Maharaja of Mithila and his brother and, hence, this stands out as a work demonstrating

both his scholarship and poetic art at their best. His mentioning of the name of the Maharaja is limited not only to his dedication, but also extended to the eulogizing of Maharaja's virtues in many an illustration of the figures of speech.

Poets from Vidyapati to Kavivar Sitaram Jha have, in course of their poetic compositions, mentioned the names of their patrons and displayed their poetic excellence in eulogizing them. Though Kavivar, like Vidyapati and other preceding poets, had not taken to the complete patronage of the king, nor did he dance attendance on the king at his court, he possessed a similar mentality. Hence despite being so liberal in his approach, in my view he could not be so revolutionary as his own disciple 'Yatri' could be.

In 'Alankara Darpana' the definitions of figures of speech are given in verse illustrations but at places he has also illumined the definitions and illustrations in prose commentaries. Some figures of speech have been illustrated by one, other by two, still others by three and yet others by four examples.

In the first part, after 'Mangalacharan' (Introductory Prayer) figures of speech have been defined and classified. They have then been explained in prose. Following this, the poet has dealt with verbal figures of speech one by one. Its seven kinds, namely, 'Punaruktivadabhas', 'Anupras', 'Jamak', 'Vakrokti', 'Shlesh', 'Chitra', 'Bhashasamak' have been enunciated along with the further divisions of each. As example of 'Jamak', the agony of the beloved in separation ('Virahini Nayika') has been rendered in a very striking style :

Chait na chetan ho tan me
Van bhring nachait na neek lagai achhi
Bhukhan bhar, lagai achhi bhukh na
Bhu-kha-Nagadi na neek lagai achhi
Bhava machan na, chan na chanan
Chanan lep karej salai achhi
Ne patiyay lagaik sakhi sab
Ne nati ayal, ji dahalai achhi

I have no sense left in my body
Though it be Chaitra
The black bee dancing in groves do repulse me
Ornaments are a burden, nor have I appetite
The earth, the sky or gems are anathema to me
The swing, the moon and sandal paste I abhor

Even balming my body with sandal
Burns my heart
My friends believe me not
In the absence of my love
I only pine and wilt !

In the second part, 'Arthalankara' has been analysed. From 'Upama' to 'Praman' one hundred and five figures of speech together with their sub-divisions have been explained through definitions, examples and commentaries. In this part also prose has been used at many places.

'Chapalatishayokti Alankara' has been defined in this way :

If at the very hearing of the cause
One shows its effect,
The figure is the 'Chapal Atishayokti'
To the point perfect.

Now enjoy its illustration :

No sooner did I hear my love saying, 'I go today,'
Than lo ! I was all over sweat-bathed in every way :
Besides, all the lac bangles my wrists bedecked
Slipping off to the ground, one by one got cracked !
Again as I heard him say, 'I postpone my going',
Deep from the cup of ambrosial joy my heart started drinking !
Oh Friend ! just see again what more started happening-
The blouse-buttons at my breast broke strangely straining !

Undoubtedly, both the parts of 'Alankara Darpana' are Kavivar's works of note. They are perfect not only from the viewpoint of poetic art, but also from the point of view of schlarship.

Maithili Chhandolankar Manjusha

This composition was serially published in the *Mithila Moda* in the months of 'Chaitra' and 'Vaishakha' of 1923. The part dealing with 'Alankara' (Figures of Speech) was included in *Alankara Darpana* but the part dealing with prosody (Metre) remained uncollected. According to Kavivar the knowledge of figures of speech as well as of prosody was necessary for one who took to versification. What verse is, what its types are etc. have been richly treated in this book. This work too plays its role in establishing his scholarship. He was himself a great master of verse.

Eight of his aforementioned works come under the category of compositions related to particular 'Shastra', of which five are in book form.

Padhua Charitra Tatha Purvapar Vyavahar (The character of a modern student and the old custom)

This book, the first published work of Kavivar, is, as it were, the first flower of devotion offered to Maithili, which may be regarded as Kavivar's first ambitious step in the pursuit of poetry. The very title of the work indicates that it contains poems on two different subjects, the first entitled, 'Padhua Charitra' (The character of modern student) and the second 'Purvapar Vyavahar' (The old custom). Apparently though the two subjects appear to be different, the contents of both have an internal affinity. Considiring the affinity between the·two Kavivar must have decided to combine both the poems in a single combination.

The plight of the land of Mithila forms the subject-matter of the first part of Kavivar's work. The background in which the poet started writing poetry has already been outlined. It will, therefore, be appropriate to evaluate the book in that perspective.

Kavivar was a traditional Maithil Pandit a-la-mode Mithila, an upholder of Maithil culture and a custodian of Maithil ways and manners. Hence he was a supporter of the traditional education. Just at that time the tide turned in favour of English type school-education and the Maithil youths could not remain in isolation. The youths of Mithila, reeling under the effects of the western education, began to look down upon their own culture, ways and manners, racial qualities and self-respect. Further, they held their mother-tongue in contempt and assumed a kind of self superiority. Apart from those who had started learning English, even those who read Sanskrit were apparently influenced by the new English educational system and they had little hesitation in casting away their cultural pride and dignity. This situation became simply intolerable for the poet. With a view to reform such deviationists he riddled them with his trenchant verse-satires and, further, made a spirited call to them to respect their mother-tongue. Let us examine a verse as a specimen depicting the ways of the newly educated youths and the wrong direction they had taken by forgetting their language and script :

"How can we call ourselves educated enough when we have forgotten even the use of our own script ? We look down upon those

who follow the traditional ways and in the place of traditionally used 'SWASTI' in a letter we now begin it with 'My dear'. I detest such education as it teaches our youths to forget our traditional ways."

(Prose rendering)

The western education taught one to be self-centered and shattered the joint family system. It made one neglect the moral values of the old education and made one rather too materialistic in one's outlook :

Being educated, their sole object
Is limited to hunting for money ;
Finding one or other livelihood
They ignore their duty and ceremony :
Having got but some money
They cut asunder the family-roots
And don themselves in shirt
Hat, glasses and boots !

To enlighten such people Kavivar has given the examples of the dog, jackal, ant and bird and has directed them to learn the value of dutifulness from them.

"It becomes incumbent upon you that after finishing education you maintain your family and relations by your earning and follow the cultural path determined by your ancestors !"

(Prose rendering)

The subject-matter of *Purvapar Vyavahar* is nearly the same. In this poem while, on the one hand, he depicts the glorious tradition of Mithila, on the other, he bemoans the present degeneration, instructing the youth to follow the eternal path of 'Dharma' (The Religion Eternal). There was a time when banished to the forest at the instance of his father, Ramchandra had expressed—"Shall the forest afford me any less joy than the heaven ?" and now is the time when we :

"What a shame that today we behave like masters of our parents and order them around most arrogantly ! Even while your mother, every minute, dies with worry for your welfare you repay the regard with a vulgar abuse !"

While in the olden days the kings were always dedicated to the welfare of their subjects, these days even a commoner with a little wealth assumes lordly airs and falls a victim to sloth and idleness :

"Acquisition of a little wealth makes us behave like millionaires and then we do not even so much as deign to wear our 'dhoti' ourselves. We practically do nothing except a wash in the toilet and even for putting our 'dhoti' in place we shamelessly depend upon our valet." (Prose-rendering)

Hence the poet cautions the youths to hold fast to their moorings and not to be swept off their feet by the new assumptions of the changing times.

The lively language of these poems is largely responsible for this book's immense popularity which is such that some of its verses still stick as memorable quotes on the lips of all and sundry.

Ratna Sangraha

Kavivar started a series under the title *Sukti Sudha* in which he collected such aphoristic poems as had a variety of themes, verse-styles and situations. These poems were specially dear to the poet. He had himself expressed in course of an interview :

"Though in general all my poems are dear to me, if you want me to name a single composition, which is most dear to me, I would name it as *Sukti Ṣudha*."

(*O Je Kahalani*, Shri Hansaraj, p.47)

Stung with envy by his growing popularity as a poet, the conventional scholars of his time tried to dismiss his poems by calling them mere rhymes. But Kavivar's aphorisms had such power in them that no storm of opposition could do him any harm. He kept on delighting society with his nectarine aphoristic verses (Suktis).

The first part of *Sukti Sudha* is *Ratnasangraha* (Collection of Gems). This comprises the independent poems (Muktak Kavya) dealing with a variety of themes representing the wide all-embracing outlook of the poet. From 'Deva Stuti' (Songs in praise offering to gods) to 'Taka Stuti' (Songs in praise of money) there are poems on diverse themes in this collection. Among poems praising gods and invoking of them the general well being of the people there are compositions adoring Ganesh, Lord Shiva, goddess Jagadamba, Mithila, Mithilesh (Maharaja of Darbhanga) and goddess Lakshmi. Next, there are poems which trace how words change from their

original Sanskrit forms ('Tatsama') to the colloquial ('Tadbhava') and how that leads to disappearance of uniformity in writing style. The poet's unambiguous stand in this regard is worth our notice :

But improper it is,
For, confusion only begets errors :
So the learned always follow
The pronunciation in writing letters
Words like 'Stuti' if combined
With another initial sound
'Stri' to 'Istri', 'Stuti' to 'Astuti'
And 'Sthan' to 'Asthan' turn round.

This is followed by fine aphorisms on 'Samasokti', 'Data Kripana' (the generous and the miserly), 'Chugila' (The back biter), Durjan (the wicked), etc. For example :

I am higher in value if valued by people,
Otherwise I am as I am, simple and humble
Even a small penny may be worth thousand rupees
As a note is its value, not what it is !

Then the striking aphorisms composed in the framework of 'Anyokti', 'Lokokti', 'Apanhuti', 'Vakrokti', 'Vyajokti', 'Chatukti', 'Kakukti' etc. perforce draw our attention. We may examine the excellence of such expressions in Kavivar's two aphorisms :

O tusker ! if thou hast might,
Then go, a lion encounter :
Thy bravery won't be proved
By pulling down a plantain cluster !

O donkey ! go to a king's court
Whose minister is so generous
That the horse, elephant, camel and ass
Receive honours equally glorious !

A fair number of aphorisms are the literal or shadow translations of Sanskrit. His 'Suktis' composed on the proverbs of exclusively Maithil origin give them a typical Maithil character :

Merely boasting of ancestors glory
Himself never practising a moral theory
He swaggers like a 'Babu' outside his house

Within pops up and down the hungry mouse !

Everyone daily taking a rod and line
Catches fish and enjoys its soup so fine !
But asks me merely to find a worm to bait the hook
As if I Dinanath, were a top fool and crook !

The female ('Nayika's') beauty from head to foot as detailed by him is also highly arresting. For instance, see the way her hair design has been described :

The maiden's hair-decoration
Is like Cupid's skilful snare
Seeing which a youth's heart
Is entrapped like a deer !

Equally noteworthy is the striking description of love-bite :

'The fair lady has passed every test in sexual sport. Testifying to it, as it were, the Cupid has written down his certificate of distinction on her very lips !' (Prose-rendering)

Kavivar has drawn our attention towards the degeneration of Mithila by way of attacking the Maithil youth through 'Kakukti':

'If you go to the house of the newly educated and observe them, you won't find the slightest trace of decorum. Coat and shirt have taken the place of customary items of dress. Meditation, 'Japa' or ceremony forms no part in their life's scheme where the chief goal of life is only to earn money. I doubt what must be the case with other cultural regions when we find the traditional cultural glory of Mithila so faded !' (Prose-rendering)

Similarly he has also mounted attacks on the sinful ways of affluent Maithil families :

If burnt be paddy
Why get a farm ready ?
If betels be rotten
Let 'jarda' be forgotten !
What use having couch any
Without a damsel for night company ?
If body be all muddy
Why try to be dust-free ?
If mango-groves be felled

What charm can a garden yield ?
If all lands be on auction
Why preserve any oxen ?
If evils are committed
Within the family unremitted
If all righteousness be out-driven
What use maintaining curtain ?

After some riddles and descriptions of months like 'Paush' and 'Magh' we get some prayer songs dedicated to gods and goddesses which are just in conformity with the poet's faith. The collection is concluded by 'Taka Stuti' (Eulogy to money) which reveals the poet's peculiar talent for humour and satire. Under each title there are numerous sub-titles weaving a garland of multicoloured verse blossoms. The poet's linguistic excellence has attained its climax here.

Loka Lakshana

The second division of *Sukti Sudha* is 'Loka Lakshana'. The virtues and vices inherent in human nature have been excellently distinguished from one another in this book. It begins with the classifcations of men on the basis of these broad distinguishing qualities followed by an amplification of all these characteristics. Each human type distinguished by certain characteristics has been given a particular name. Maithil society has long been familiar with such names. Under two chapters—Man and Woman—the poet gave such accurate descriptions of each type according to its nature and character that these verses became immediately popular in every Maithil household.

Before presenting the main body of the verses depicting different human types the book begins with poems invoking divine benediction followed by a verse-preface as to the purpose behind the work. Herein the four divisions of men as defined by the scriptures, namely, Hare, Deer, Horse and Bull, have been described with their specific characteristics. This is followed by a discussion of two distinct opinions, one held by the traditional pundits and the other by the new ones, as regards the characteristics of the classical types of men. Then making gross and subtle distinctions among the fortythree types such as 'Murkha' (Fool), 'Budi' (Senseless), 'Bakalel' (Stupid), 'Lafandar' (Loafer), 'Luchcha' (Cheat), 'Agimuttu' (Dare-devil), 'Bangat' (Naughty), 'Langat' (Scoundrel),

'Sahalola' (Spoilt) etc. the poet goes on to give their 'Lakshana', i.e. distinguishing features. The noblest type among men is said to belong to the class of 'Shasha' (Hare). His characteristics are :

A matchless face in lustre and grace ;
Even thousand moons won't equal ;
His charming speech like nectar sweet ;
Ever capable like the earth universal !
He performs each deed with conscientous heed
To the righteous path dedicated :
His good name ensured, by people adored
This is the 'Hare' type scripturally illustrated !

In contrast to this is the Bull ('Vrish') type, by far the meanest, whose characteristics are :

His body dust-stained, like cobweb blackened
He is bitter tongued like a wild root
Face like fire-sling during Diwali night whirling
His daily meal so poor, in misery he's made mute ;
Rejoices as a serpent in putting others to torment,
Harming his own home, with gloom ever filled
An arrant fool, he is a typical 'Bull'
That even for his child is double-willed !

The 'Bangat' (Naughty) and the 'Langat' (Scoundrel), though of the same category, have but a subtle difference between their natures. The poet has brought out the difference with a perfect grasp of the distinction between the two :

He abuses the unguarded pedestrian
Fights, for nothing, with one and all
Feels puffed up at his naughty acts
Such a one 'Bangat' do we call

'Langat' :

Between the Naughty and the Scoundrel
The latter's behaviour is surely meaner
The 'Bangat' does harm to others alone
The 'Langat' doesn't even his father spare

Similarly, in the chapter dealing with the different types of female species the poet depicts the characteristics of the four types as determined by the scriptures viz. 'Padmini' (Lotus-like), 'Chitrani'

(Picture-like), 'Hastini' (Elephant-like) and 'Shankhini' (Conchshell-like). Again, according to their qualities he has made distinctions between the well-mannered and the ill-mannered. Next, he gives an accurate picture of the twelve general types of women, such as 'Budhiari' (Wise), 'Phuhari' (Inexpert) 'Aparojaki' (Filthy), 'Chatura' (Expert), Girthani (Mistress), Bhardulahi (Mean), 'Chhulahi' (Greedy), 'Jihulahi' (Salivating or Taste-seeker), 'Albatahi' (Mannerless), 'Karkasha' (Loud-mouthed), 'Nisokhi' (Cruel) and 'Harjai' (Characterless). The most virtuous is called 'Padmini', whose accomplishments are :

A beauteous nose, sweet smile like rose
She longs only for sari ceremoniously red
Such dartlike eyes and bow-like brows
Her moon-like face does always lustre shed
Well devoted to her lord, righteously disposed
Wide in her thighs, but waist narrowly done
Padmini grace-adorned, by gods adored
Only by the most blessed is ever won !

Just in contrast to this is the presentation of the features distinguishing a 'Shankhini':

"A 'Shankhini Nayika' is marked by her hair showing like a crow's nest, head like a hedge-row, eyes like deep pits and teeth like spades. Harsh-tongued, her gait is like that of a horse and her belly as big as a hamper or a godown. She has no manners, keeps evil company and is wilful. Most fiendish by nature, she delights only in tormenting others. If such a woman be your partner, you are doomed to reside in a hell for ever."

(Prose-rendering)

The fine distinction obtaining between 'Chhulahi' and 'Jihulahi' could have been perceived only by Kavivar's discerning eyes.

'Chhulahi'

She would gobble up any food at home visible,
Even from grains meant for deities she takes a handful !
Wistfully would she watch someone eat ;
Only a 'Bhardulahi' a 'Chhulahi' does beat.

'Jihulahi'

Though her home be full of eatables for ever

Her mouth waters to see others' dishes even inferior !
Now sugar, now pickle and soon sauce she licks :
Thus 'Jihulahi' always something dainty picks !

Even while these verses were gaining immense popularity there were people who alleged that the poet looked only at the dark side of man and society. In all likelihood, he had this very allegation in view, when he wrote *Parichaya Darpana* which gives out the features of ideal types. But *Parichaya Darpana* could hardly gain the popularity which his *Loka Lakshana* had won. Even now some of its stanzas can be heard from the lips of even illiterate women of Mithila.

Upadeshakshamala

This book forms the third part of *Sukti Sudha*. The very title of the book indicates that it comprises moral lessons. An attempt has been made to remind people of the importance of religion and the necessity for devotion to God. Hence the poet seems to have written this book as an example of 'Shanta Rasa' (tone of equanimity). This fact has also been mentioned in the book. In his introduction the poet, in course of explaining its purpose, declares :

"In order that our children might get wiser by these teachings of wisdom while they still learnt their alphabet I have written some maxims in verse using alliteration of letters in alphabetical order in the 'Ashwaghati' metre in 'Shanta Rasa' (tone or flavour of equanimity). I would consider it as a reward for my pains if it is of any use to the children."

Though the poet's aim might have been the education of children, it has achieved such a technical excellence of versification, syntax and combination of words that the verses rise above the level of children's understanding and have become an invaluable treasure of literature.

'Ashwaghati' metre has been regarded as technically the most difficult, its special feature being the repetition of a particular letter which creates a marvellous effect. The sound so created produces a rhythm like the persistent foot-fall of a horse in gallop.

There are sixty-one verses in the aforementioned metre in the book, composed with letters having long vowel sounds at the end in alphabetical order. Every verse unravels some moral code, gospel or eternal truth. Kavivar has included only such sermons or gospels as may create noble thoughts in the child's mind, arouse love for the

mother-tongue and finally make him a devotee of God or God-oriented. While the young ones are asked to shake off idleness and to perform their duties conscientiously, they are also advised to rid their society of many social evils as also to cherish only noble ideals in life.

The poet says that real happiness in life could come only through devotion to God and not through education, wealth and travels.

Having crammed CAT 'cat' or PAT 'pat'
We may secure the degree of B.A.
What if we raise our status by earning
A hundred rupees or so a day !
We might, going to the eastern region,
Bring money to pride ourselves on material gains,
But can we without adoring 'Ekdant'
Be really happy or end our pains ?

See how the poet exhorts one to build one's personality :

As if our manners were but tasty pickles.
Thou hast licked them up and discarded :
Being helpless and having lost all thy moorings,
The evil company thou hast adopted !
O depraved ! meditating on thy mother's glory,
Won't thou retrieve thy name high and heavenly,
Shunning the evil and elevating thy desires,
Hold to the path that's righteous and holy ?

and—

Having eaten and drunk, we take a dart in hand,
Our sole business is to get to a tank :
If we catch but a fish, we trumpet our glory,
And boast of our glorious rank.
Veiling our misdeeds, vice do we perpetuate.
And shudder not at our impending destruction ;
Proving ourselves sinners, alas ! we don't come
Still under God's all merciful protection !

Referring to the rowdy acts that we commit in the name of 'Holi', Kavivar observes:

With coloured water and bagful of 'Gulal'
Beating drums we turn into rowdy people :

Rubbing fair lady's cheeks with coloured powder
The red water all over her body we sprinkle
In manners all evil, our songs run riot ;
With barbarous might a wild chorus we make,
Whirling and whizzing and vainly dancing,
Never do we goddess Gouri's name take !

Kavivar also advises the Maithils residing in Kashi to avoid getting involved in any dispute or quarrel :

'Alas O Maithils ! living in the hallowed imperishable city of Lord Shiva, the Land of Siddhas, you indulge in pranks with vulgar women-folk here. Please abstain from it and avoid all quarrels or disputes. Shun your chamaleon-like manners and, taking to your own virtuous path, always exercise caution, lest you get into sorry pitfalls unawares !' (Prose-rendering)

In the majority of the verses of *Upadeshakshamala* the poet has preached devotion to God. This important work, though well received by the learned, could not be as popular as his earlier work *Loka Lakshana* mainly because of its dry and didactic subject-matter.

Bhukampa Varnana

Kavivar has written *Bhukampa Varnana* as the fourth part of *Sukti Sudha*. At noon on January 15, 1934 Bihar received a terrible shock of earthquake which caused an enormous destruction of both men and materials . The earth continued to quake for full three minutes, in course of which, the whole creation seemed to have gone out of order. The poet's compassionate heart registered its terrible effect and made it the subject matter of his poetry.

Astrology discusses earthquake, its time, characteristics and its preliminary form etc. Being an astrologer himself, the poet throws light on these points. The causes of earthquake are noteworthy :

When evil-ridden fire, water and air are on increase,
In the solar zodiac five planets together coalesce:
Or else the sun's or moon's sphere gets close to earth,
The filth locked up in the earth's womb bursts forth:
Heaven's wrath breaks out of earth's crust,
As people get irreligious or kings corrupt.

After some verses invoking divine grace, the poet gives a graphic and at once moving chronicle of this historic calamity with its date and time. The descriptions are vivid and spontaneous. The earthquake had occurred at noon, at about 1.30 P.M. At that moment those who were asleep inside the house were buried under the debris, and others :

Ran out of their houses those who were awake,
Others rolled over, getting hurt in the quake:
Many were crushed, the weak shocked dead,
In the lanes many fell under walls, the ill-fated.

Many died in sleep or while standing or writing ;
Still others lost lives, soda or tea drinking .
Tailors got crushed under the very machine sewing,
Many came out even after three days, living !

This was the fate of humans; what happened to materials and property may be seen through the eyes of the poet :

"Whereas many trains got derailed, others were either put out of action or got smashed at their stations themselves. Telephone wires snapped. Everyone was dazed. None had any idea as to what happened to the other in such confusion !" (Prose rendering)

The poet has also described the all-round destruction of Darbhanga Raj and the Rajnagar palace buildings. It is followed by an account of the help and relief operations carried out by different government agencies, voluntary service organisations and those rendered by the Darbhanga Maharaja and the philanthropic rich. While the poet has words of praise for help and relief rendered by the rich, he also remembers to mention praiseworthy service rendered by some humble government employees :

Sri Muralidhar Jha, the brave Police Inspector whole-heartedly
Helped save the people of his whole division most devotedly
Whose every work wins such a wise praise and glory
That it's difficult to recount even a part of his marvellous story !

This work has become a remarkable contribution to the Maithili literature because of its natural flow, credibility of its account and its artistic charm. That the poet holds such a natural calamity as the result of deterioration in people's righteousness is only just in tune with his implicit faith in religion.

Siksha Sudha

Siksha Sudha , again, was composed as the fifth and the last part of *Sukti Sudha*. The book is designated as 'First Part'. A scrutiny of its content and its narrative flow indicates that it is an unfinished work. It could not be completed because its second part could not be written. Even if the narration lacks sense of finality the verses containing moral advice are complete in themselves. From this view-point the absence of the second part does not make itself felt. Even for the reason that the well-known story of Rama's devotion to his father has been treated herein, the part which has been left out does not arouse much curiosity on the part of the reader. The poet's aim was not merely to repeat the story of Rama in verse, but to preach to Maharaja Kameshwar Singh and Raja Bahadur Vishweshwar Singh the unique value of paternal devotion. Hence it is not the story, but the education inherent in it that has any importance. The book written with the explicit aim of contributing to Mithilesh Rameshwar Singh's task of imparting education to both of his sons presents teachings of moral values in natural and homely phraseology. Divided into two sections (called 'Tarang'), the first section beginning with the invocation of divine benediction in fact sings the glory and greatness of Maharaja Rameshwar Singh. Second section is devoted to the praise of the charming personalities and the qualities of the head and heart of the two sons of the Maharaja. Then follow the words of wisdom taught by Maharaja Rameshwar Singh to his sons. According to Kavivar education means gathering knowledge of a good kind, practice of righteousness and turning to God one's mind.

Books are not the only source of education. One learns as much from the company of the learned as from the perusal of the biographies of great men. But for an all-round development of personality the inherent qualities of goodness must be developed through discipline and devotion to duty.

Say, from what university
Did Mother Sita take a degree
For service to husband, household duties
And patience in misery ?
What books of metaphysics or 'Vedant'
Did Kabir study ?
That attaining light he became
Truly liberated even in body ?

Did Sabari go to a school
To take instruction or lesson
As to how to offer at the divine Lotus Feet
Her heart's true devotion ?

Even the best of conditions diteriorates due to negligence. When a thing is deformed it cannot be brought back to its pristine form even by thousand attempts.

Irreversible effect evil in the good causes,
As a bit of sour whole milk decomposes.
Once deformed, one doesn't mend again,
As rancid milk does never purity regain.

How man should be guided by good counsel from Nature may be observed from these words of the poet :

The sun from its course never deviates
Always shines bright, never deteriorates.
Running through the twelve months' duration,
It teaches us a golden lesson.

Similarly :

Waning and waxing of the moon
Tells us from heaven :
No one's time in the world
Is all the time even !

In the same manner man learns even from birds and animals :

For control of sleep and devotion to master,
Contented with a crumb the dog is our teacher.

The first section has eighty two couplets with a concluding verse in 'Barbai' metre.

The second section is devoted to the widely known story of Rama, but it highlights only that part of Rama's character wherein he displays his singular devotion to his father. While imparting many a moral lesson the poet herein shows how one should discharge one's duty towards parents :

Just as a cart on two wheels runs,
So the world on both Providence and Toil turns.

The poet observes that the same job done by two persons would invariably yield two kinds of result. So one has to accept the supremacy of fate :

Between similar plots by the same ridge bordered
While the one has abundant crops, the other is sand-covered.

Thus with sixty-eight couplets and a concluding 'Barbai' verse, the second section comes to a close.

Parichaya Darpana

Parichaya Darpana acquaints us with different kinds of individuals and types of objects. Though *Loka Lakshana* also belongs to the same type, the difference between the two is that while the latter gives the characteristics of different men on the basis of difference in their nature, the former familiarises us with objects as well as with men. Yet both are different in that while *Loka Lakshana* tells us which people we should reject for company, *Parichaya Darpana* shows who others deserve company. In the introductory part of this book the poet presents us with a catalogue of ideal things. A number of verses from this book have been retained intact in the eighth chapter of *Ambacharita*

This book begins with the description of the Eternal Verity. The verse is obviously benedictory in nature. This is followed by 'Gana Parichaya' (description of Ganas), types of men and features of places. Some miscellaneous descriptions are also given at the end.

Ganas have been divided into five types—gods, sages, humans, demons and animals. For example, the poet says as to who could be called a Man :

One who is clever at accomplishing his object
And has a sense of right and wrong,
To whom the virtues of pity and purity
Belief in God and a fear of sin do belong,
Whose action each is guided for ever
By gods and sages, and yet does yield
To all contrary and contradictory effects,
For this blemish alone he is human called !

Under 'Varna Parichaya' 'Brahmana', 'Kshatriya', 'Vaishya', 'Shudra', 'Dvija', 'Savarna' and 'Antyaja' have been described.

Then follows the part which lays down the characteristics of man, woman, father, son, mother, daughter, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, wife, friend, king, subjects, master, servant, teacher, disciple, Pandit, fool, saint, jury and the clever one.

For example, the descriptions of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are worth-noticing :

Loves her daughter-in-law
From her heart's core ;
Even if something goes unattended
Doesn't order her any more ;
Tolerating all her wrongs
Only sweet words and comforts serves :
She alone the appelation
Of a celebrated mother-in-law deserves !

Daughter-in-law

One who prefers to dwell at her husband's place,
Serves her mother and father-in-law,
To their satisfaction and home works alone
All her attention does she gladly draw ;
Never does she mind her own troubles,
Instead, seeks only glory and fame,
Such a daughter-in-law, ever cheerful,
Truly deserves a good name !

In course of defining celebrated places the poet gives his definiton of which is a great nation, an ideal village, an illustrious house, a famous market, an established school, a monastery, a park, a tank, a meeting, heaven and hell. Here are the features of an established school.

Where teachers, both learned in subjects
And skilled in action,
Observing the worth of disciples
Impart proper education ;
Where students again
Proper rules and manners follow :
Surely such an institution
Is with dignity fully aglow !

Lastly under the section of miscellaneous descriptions pleasures of a happy home, delicious dishes, celebrated life and death and just social order have been given due deliverance.

In *Parichaya Darpana* the subjects have been analysed with such subtlety and ease that the readers become fully enlightened with the topic. In spite of this special feature this book could not be quite popular; may be because people are generally averse to being told to imbibe ideals.

Unata Basat

Unata Basat is representative of Kavivar Sitaram Jha's liberal views. The reason which prompted the poet to compose this poem has already been dealt with at length in course of analysing the poet's personality. Herein, in only 25 verses written in a satirical vein on fifteen topics Kavivar vindicates his stand in a vibrant manner. Its moot theme is that of social and political anomalies and the poetic form used is that of 'Samasyapurti' (i.e. projection of a given line into a poem). Having observed a lot of aberrations, the poet felt that there was no visible order in the society of the humans and that, figuratively speaking, the wind was blowing in the wrong direction. Pat came the line to him to serve as a refrain in his poems :

The wind today is blowing in the opposite direction.

The poet has incorporated this line in varied ways. At the very outset the poet sets down the main purpose of the work :

"It is accepted by every soul that performance of duty is a virtue and deviation from it is a sin and that virtue leads to happiness and sin to misery. In 'Shastras' and 'Puranas' an action which harms none and which is rather beneficial not only to one's own self but to others as well is called duty, while that which harms others has been declared as unworthy. Despite such knowledge only those actions which are unworthy of man are being committed in this age. I have tried to deal with this very topic under the title *Unata Basat*."

The style of this composition is satirical and it is directed against social ills. The purity of Maithil culture has been despoiled by western English education. This is the subject which serves as the main butt of Kavivar's satire. The dissolution of the age-old ideals of the joint family system elicits a sharp reaction from the poet thus :

Every home was the abode of high virtue :
Everyone liked the righteous path to purse.

There was distinction between the older and the younger.
Service to mother-in-law was the spirit stronger.
Since every woman liked to act up to her orders,
cheerfully would she take home-duties upon her shoulders.
Women were deeply devoted to their spouse,
Won't, for nothing, step out of their house.
There now in every house only evil reigns;
Daughter-in-law holds the mother-in-law in chains,
Passes orders on her one after another;
If the old dame delays even a little longer,
The young woman flashes into a fury of anger
And foul invectives on her does shower;
Then holding her locks, kicks her in a wild way!
The wind in the anti-direction is blowing today!

Though Kavivar was a great champion of the cause of traditional cultural values of Mithila he was not so bigoted as to hold the view that the wife should not accompany the husband to where the husband worked, i.e. outside the family's hearth and home. Citing instances from the mythological stories of his own land he has proved that the custom of a wife living abroad with her husband was in practice in the past too:

The higly learned daughter of Mithila's emperor,
Who dwelt in the mansion of golden splendour,
Though young, she was so duty-conscious
That rejecting the wishes of her in-laws gracious
Followed, like a true life partner her dear husband,
Fourteen years in the forest roamed from land to land:
Then no one charged her as wanting in knowledge,
Instead, by her deeds she glorified either lineage.
But, if before her mother-in-law today,
A lady, most rightly, decides her husband to obey
And attends on her lord in pure devotion,
Serves him water herself in deep affection,
Suffers hardships for her husband's sake,
We call her sinful, wilful, a 'kaliyuga make'!
What can be stranger than this, say?
The wind in the anti-direction is blowing today!

Recalling the glory of the past Kavivar has said :

The land whose glory was sung far and wide,

Where righteousness and morality were everyone's guide,
None to the fear of robbery was ever exposed,
Each in each an unbounded trust reposed.

But he is worried about the present state of affairs:

We see everyone falling into evil company,
For nothing the good are put to unjust tyranny,
Immorality thrives at the cost of morality,
The protege no longer to his patron bears loyalty.

Kavivar has also thrown some light on the contemporary political events of the world. He has made a seathing attack on those flaunting modernity. Finally pointing to the confusion in respect of the decision of Pandits on 'Atichar', the poet concludes with confidence, saying :

For those, who keep clear
Of malice and deception,
The world is ever straightforward
And there is no deviation !

In no other work his attack on jealousy, malice, deception, fraud, social inequality, current political events etc. is as trenchant as in *Unata Basat*.

Maithili Kavya Khataras

Maithili Kavya Khataras was published in 1968 in Kavivar's old age. Herein six types of poems with different 'Rasas' (Classical types) have been collected under six titles. These books with titles similar to those of the three poems viz., 'Unata Basat', 'Loka Lakshana' and 'Parichaya Darpana' (excluding the account of his own self), had already been published. The rest of the poems, such as, 'Ajgut Kahini', 'Virahini Bala Brajavanitak Barahamasa' and 'Sadadesh' are new compositions. In addition to these, there is one more composition, 'Appan Parichaya', which is a sequel to *Parichaya Darpana*.

If Kavivar had to include some of his older compositions in the collection published after such a long interval, the reason for it is that during this period he had given up composing poems in Maithili. He had himself admitted the fact in his introduction to *Maithili Kavya Khataras*.

Besides the importance of the three compositions in *Kavya Khataras*, its distinction lies in that Kavivar here formulates his views on 'Rasa' (Classical types). According to the 'Shastras' the number of Rasas is nine, but Kavivar does not approve of it. In his view there are only six 'Rasas' namely 'Adbhuta' (Surprise), 'Karuna' (Compassion), 'Shringar' (Amorous), 'Hasya' (Humour), 'Vira' (Chivalry) and 'Shanta' (Peace). The additional three 'Rasas' as enumerated in the 'Shastras', viz., 'Bhayanak' (terror-creating), 'Roudra' (fury inciting) and 'Bibhatsa' (hate-invoking), according to the poet, are subsumed in the very 'Rasas' named above. Even our eatables have only six flavours—bitter, salty, sweet, sour, pungent and bitter-sweet ('Kashaya'). Thus in his view poetry which is an object of enjoyment should have only six 'Rasas'.

The first poem is 'Ajgut Kahini'. This serves to illustrate 'Adbhuta Rasa' (Surprise). Times are changing so fast that what is assumed as impossible today may become possible tomorrow. The poet has underlined some such uncommon things under this category of poems thus :

Now fire would turn into ice
And we would see the rock melting
The wayfarer would be standing still
The path itself may be seen moving.
Fire, water, land and air
Under full sway would be held
The dance going on in Bombay
Would be in Calcutta beheld !

Today with the help of science all these have turned possible. But what would strike as extra-ordinary even now is :

Water to heaven would go by transportation
On the stars and the moon you would do cultivation!

Even these statements may turn into realities one day and then they would no longer serve as illustrations of 'Adbhuta Rasa'.

After finishing this part of *Parichaya Darpana* the poet has presented his own identity in the vein of humour and satire. Comparing himself to Lord Vishwanath of Kashi he has proved himself as superior to Him :

'We swindle gold from the Lord of the World (Vishwanath) by offering Him only a Bel-leaf, and when he makes us rich do we care

to pay Him back even a pinch of salt? The magnanimous Lord allows Himself to be thus beguiled by prayers. Commoners only try to cheat the rich by tricks of a lowly nature!' (Prose-rendering)

What more could be said of the boundless benevolence of Lord Vishwanath? Through this oblique expression of 'Bhakti' the poet really shows his whole-hearted dedication to Baba Vishwanath. But what is remarkable about it is the obliquity and the style.

'Virahini Bala Brajavanitak Barahamasa' (A month-by-month song of the maidens of Braja in separation) is an instance of the poet's mature composition in 'Shringar Rasa'. It was possible only by a poet of Sitaram Jha's calibre to have rendered in such a graceful language and manner the pangs of separation of the maidens of Braja. Take for example Radha's pangs of separation in the months of 'Asadh' and 'Saon' (the season of rains) :

It is the month of Asadh,
The sky is overcast with clouds :
But my heart is heavy
With the pangs of my partner's separation.
Those who have their beloved at home
Are having such a good time,
But my Shyam, O friend, is far far away
Leaving me all alone.
How the peacocks dance with joy
At the rumble of clouds!
The month of 'Saon' has arrived
On a swing of wind !
But I have no joy,
Nothing pleases me !
How like a desert my home has grown for me !

Radha's pangs in each of the twelve months have been presented with the same liveliness. At the end the poet writes a poem of invocation called 'Sadadesh'.

For having iron muscle
Boy ! go and wrestle
For wisdom to burn
The Vedic books do churn

To serve thy motherland
In the army's front, stand
At school be so regular
As to become a boy of the first order !

Since kavivar's books are not easily available a reprint of any of his works gives the same kind of pleasure as if the same were a new work.

Maithili Kavyopavana

This book is the last collection of Kavivar's Maithili poems to come out during his life time. The poems have been divided into five sections, each called 'Kunja', (grove). As the book bears the title *Kavyopavan* (Poetic Garden), it makes poetic sense to name its chapters as 'Kunja' or grove. Though the collection contains some old poems, there are some important ones which are entirely new. The first 'Kunja' has poems which are obviously composed as per classical poetic rules ('Shastras'), but from the second to the fifth 'Kunja' we have poetic verses.

The first 'Kunja' begins with an invocation to God followed by verses describing objects, in course of which many points of 'Shastras' together with practical topics like poet and poetry, poetic talent and poetic power, poetic garden, Mithila, kinds of poetry, demerits of poetry, merits of good poetry, ornament of poetry etc. have been analysed. Just as in *A lankara Darpana* so also here prose has been used to explain 'Lakshana' (characteristics). In the process of defining a concept of 'Shastra' he substantiates it by illustrations wherever he finds it necessary. Here also, while mentioning 'Rasas', the poet has accepted only six of them and has furnished illustrations for each. The illustrations related to 'Rasas' and even to other points are not new. They have already been given earlier in some or the other of the collections.

By far the most important of chapters ('Kunjas') of *Kavyopavana* is the second one in which the poet has provided the most captivating pictures of different seasons. While describing the cycle of seasons the poet takes the opportunity to tell us about the special features of this hallowed land of Mithila, its ceremonies held during different seasons and how important these occasions are. Furthermore, he also depicts the social, the economic as well as the political aspects of this land through these poems. But above all the

poems give a picturesque description of Nature during different seasons in Mithila. In the last verse on the splendour of the spring the poet says:

'The description of the spring was only a ruse. I, in fact, wished to put before you the picture of my land in all its bright as well as dark sides. I could have waxed eloquent but had to be content with only a few lines of verse.' (Prose rendering)

Graces and blemishes of Maithil ways and manners are excellently rendered in his verses depicting the cycle of seasons.

After vernal richness ('Vasant-Vaibhava'), the majesty of summer ('Grishma-Garima'), the might of rains ('Pavas-Prabhuttva'), the luxuriance of early winter ('Sharat-Sampatli'), the smile of mid winter ('Hemant-Has') and the aroma of later winter ('Shishir Sourabh') have been elaborately depicted. In all these places Kavivar's mature genius, charming language and subtle perceptions are worth our notice. In the hot summer.

The youthful ladies profusely sweating,
Not a shred of clothing on their bodies showing,
Wearing thin cambrics without border,
Come out to face the wind's courser.
Now they open windows, now raise blinds
And buy the fans of various kinds.
In the place of sweet cuckoo's voice
The crow's harsh cawing is their only choice.

As soon as rains set in :

The forest is astir with peacocks and crickets' sound!
The sky with wayward clouds is thickly bound!
From tormenting heat the earth is set free!
Dry wells and ponds swirl with waters on the spree!

With the advent of 'Hemant':

Greens, spinach, radishes, brinjals tasty
Cabbages, potatoes and all vegetables in plenty!
Which house is not rich with variety of fishes?
Which home is not fragrant with delicious dishes?

The third part is named 'Parichaya Kunja' in which the previously published 'Loka Lakshana', 'Parichaya Darpana' and most of the verses of the first part of *Sukti Sudha* ('Ratna Sangrah') are collected. There may be one or two new poems in between. An analysis of these compositions has already been given.

The fourth section entitled 'Katha Kunja' contains 'Bhukampa Varnana' and 'Padhua Charitra' in full and a part of *Purvapar Vyavahar*. Besides these, 'Urmila Lakshamana', 'Mithila Me Rama' and 'Dhanush Bhanga' are based on 'Rama Katha' (Story of Rama). The two latter parts are taken from *Amba Charita*. At the end comes 'Alasi Udyami Katha' which is comparatively a new composition. In this poem, in the form of a dialogue between an idle and an industrious man the poet avowedly intends to teach the moral that the world belongs to the industrious and the idle must suffer.

Samaj, Dharma O Karttavya (Society, Religion and Duty)

It is a composition with a mixture of prose and poetry, hence it has been designated as 'Champu Kavya'. It was published in the two numbers of the *Mithila Moda* in 1936. It could not take the form of a book. Here the poet expresses his views on society, religion and duty. Only that society could be called a perfect one which has as its ideals religion and duty. The poet has taken great pains to make clear what 'Dharma' (religion) means and who may be called righteous. He has called upon us to take to the path of duty, taking our 'Sanatana Dharma' to be the supreme religion. Even unworthy customs become acceptable when they are endorsed by society. He illustrates the point with the example of kerosene oil. In the beginning kerosene oil was thought to be impure but after its acceptance by society, it came to be considered as pure and began to be used even in temples: hence, it is practice that determines religion (Acharah Parmo Dharmah).

Stri Siksha Par Paramarsh (Advice on Female Education)

This is also a mixed composition (prose and poetry) and this too was published in the *Mithila Moda* in 1937. It has yet to come out in the form of a book. As indicated by its title, the poet has discussed here whether female-education is to be accepted in Mithila or not. This tract brings within the scope of his consideration the position of women in Mithila, a land where female education was in vogue. His view is :

The land where there is female-education

Is in penitence :
But equally penitent is the region
Where women wallow in ignorance !
Thus it has proved itself to be
A veritable delusion !
It's strange to see even the most sensible
Becoming captives of illusion !

In brief, it can be said that, though not against educating women, he was also not a supporter of giving them education on general lines. He wanted that first of all the attitude of people towards women should undergo a change in the proper direction. Then alone education of women could be meaningful, otherwise it would only sow seeds of dissension, without bearing any positive result. He says :

May educated ladies go in for service
And gentlemen themselves wifehood adopt:
Counting the rafters of their roof happily,
Spend their nights till morning with eyes aloft!

According to kavivar this was the inevitable result which female-education would bring. But it would be equally wrong to assume on this basis that he was against educating women. In fact, he was for a proper transformation in the social set-up.

Vidurokta Upadeshamrita

This poetic composition is not independently published in book form. It had been serially brought out in the *Mithila Moda* in 1939. Its story is taken from the Mahabharat. This is about the famous sermon on moral values delivered by Vidura in the Mahabharat. When the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas took a serious turn, Dhritarashtra, the father of the Kauravas and uncle to the Pandavas, was quite at a loss to decide as to what he should do. Not being able to oppose the injustice perpetrated by his sons, he was naturally nervous. In order to find a way out of this predicament he sent for his counsellor, Vidura and held talks with him on the moral principles. This is known as 'Vidura Niti'. By translating these precepts of Vidura into simple Maithili Kavivar has really brought them within the comprehension of the Maithili speaking

people. Even while the language is simple and appealing, the profundity of the subject has nowhere been compromised. Although Kavivar had a greater inclination towards 'Rama Katha' (Story of Lord Rama), he also wanted to render the useful topics of the Mahabharata into Maithili, and this composition specially exemplifies this fact.

The composition is marked by a gradual development of the narrative. The style is narrative and the theme is sublime. Hence it seems only proper to list it in the category of 'Muktaka Kavya'.

Amba Charita

Amba Charita (Life-story of Mother Janaki) is by far the most monumental among the entire range of Kavivar's works. Although the first canto contains only a portion of the purported story, the poet calls it the 'former' part. Since there is no 'latter' part to it this is about all that we have of this work. But, apart from the fact whether it is complete in itself or otherwise, the composition has all the elements of poetic excellence one would look for in an epic. Every page of this work speaks eloquently of the poet's great talent and scholarship. *Amba Charita* is a unique offering at the feet of Mother Maithili. It excels all other compositions of the poet in its spirit of dedication to the cause of Maithili as well as in purity of diction and scholarship. The sublimity of ideas, the natural ease of expression and a graceful unrestrained flow of language have made the work an outstanding feat of genius.

It has been mentioned earlier that the poet was a dedicated scholar of astrology, but his heart was all for Maithili. This work is a singular example of a perfect fusion of emotion and intellect. It has, thus, become what may be termed as a sacred confluence of Prayag which offers the reader the bliss of a bath in the Triveni.

Kavivar's unreserved devotion for his mother seems to be the main inspiring force behind this work. His love for mother-tongue is reflected in his other works too, but that he took up a time-taking work like an epic in hand, sparing time from his astrological studies, must have some significant cause behind it. And it was just that he wanted to pay homage to his own mother through this composition.

None in the world could be dearer to a man than his own mother; none except mother could excite feelings of worship. In order to immortalize the memory of his mother Kavivar brought to bear in Maithili his vast learning which he had so far dedicated to

astrology alone. The very title of the work suggests Kavivar's special attachment to his mother. Which character other than Janaki's would have been worthier to the poet for such an eulogy to his mother?

The reason for not completing the second part of this work may be the fact that the poet had emotionally exhausted himself by way of paying his homage to his mother in this part alone. This also proves that the only object of *Amba Charita* was to pay his homage to his mother. The following declaration testifies to this fact:

Suppose, we want to be free
From gratitude to our mother
Can we get its full price
Even if our body we offer?
I can't but simply worship
My mother's lotus feet, hence,
And offer my endless salutations
To her in complete reverence!

'Maithili' is yet another designation for Sita. It is only very recently that it has come to connote a language. In the ancient Maithili literature Sita (or Janaki) does not get any prominence anywhere. In some very ancient songs Sita has been mentioned here and there. Of course Kavishwar Chanda Jha has elaborately delineated the sublime character of Śita in his *Mithila Bhasha Ramayana*; but there also Sita comes only as a consort, complementary to Rama, who is depicted as the supreme embodiment of grace. It is Kavivar Lal Das who gave any prominence to Sita's character in his *Rameshwarcharit Ramayana* by adding to it another canto entitled 'Pushkar Kand'. But there also her character is limited to a particular canto itself rather than as the chief one pervading the whole epic. The credit of writing an independent epic with Sita as its central character is, therefore, rightly earned by Kavivar Sitaram Jha alone.

Sita is now worshipped as the symbol of the Universal Mother in Mithila and all the dwellers of Mithila regard themselves as Her progeny. Hence Kavivar's choice of the word 'Amba' (Mother Supreme) for Sita is justified in every respect.

Even if according to Sanskrit literature all the requisites of an epic are not to be found in toto in *Amba Charita* it is no doubt a successful epic. Kavivar was himself a distinguished scholar and

connoisseur of literature. He was aware of all the aesthetic requirements of an epic and was capable of writing one incorporating all the classical ingredients, but that he did not do so had valid reasons. For one thing, Kavivar knew that the classical characteristics of an epic could not be regarded as apposite by every age. It was, therefore, necessary to bring about some relevant changes in it according to the ethos of the times. He had no objection to accepting the Sanskrit literature as the basis of an epic, but he was against blind imitation. He recognised the spirit of his own age and as such deemed it only proper to allow modern thoughts to flow freely through his pen even if it meant a deviation from the conservative conception of an epic.

The story of Sita forms the basis of this epic. Rama appears only where he has been found as expedient in throwing Sita's character into relief. Although Sita's life has not been dealt with from the beginning to end and the first part ends only at the point of 'Dwiragamana' (i.e. the bride's arrival at her husband's house), her character as it is comes out fully alive. Whatever aspect of Sita's life out poet has taken up i.e. as an ideal daughter, an ideal friend, an ideal wife, or as an ideal daughter-in-law, everywhere he has presented her in the ideal form of womanhood.

After the invocatory prayer in the first canto, the style and manner in which glowing poetic tributes are paid to the mother in a language charged with genuine emotions of great love, sympathy and adoration, have, to my mind, no parallel in Maithili literature. Every line of the verse so vividly presents before us the close-up of a mother's sacrificing affection and doting care for her child that the reader is surcharged with emotions of maternal love. In fact, only twenty-six couplets, i.e. from 13 to 38, are enough for the full justification of the title *Amba Charita*. The pure, the innocent, the unsullied, the unpretentious and the sanctified image of mother so presented in the very beginning of the book proves Kavivar's fathomless devotion for his own mother. Mother's simple, natural and spontaneous tenderness for her child is depicted thus :

Always keeping me to her bosom
She would treat me as her life
To her all my excreta
Is but scent and lotion-like !
If her saree and skirt
Be with my faces and urine soiled

She would think herself rather blessed
At her good luck she is overjoyed !

As a child I would make an impossible demand for a thing. I would throw a tantrum, laugh and weep. She would manage it some how, even by begging or borrowing.

She would preserve exclusively for me any eatable which came from the neighbour as gift. Can we raise the price of mother's love even if we sell our bodies ? (Prose rendering)

After glorifying mother and dwelling a while on the child's love of father, brother, aunt, brother's wife and sister, the poet eulogizes the mother-tongue. It is here that the poet throws light on the purpose of the book:

What are men's and women's duties?
What are wrongful deeds?
What bear evil or good results
In conformity with eternal creeds?
What things are desirable or undesirable
That must be taken or left?
Verily, in order to teach these
Father and Mother supreme themselves manifest!

The poet's main purpose behind depicting the life and deeds of Father and Mother of the universe, that is, Lord Ramachandra and Maithili Janakanandini, is to teach the world a lesson or two about what is a duty and what is not. The poet has everywhere in this book kept this purpose in view.

The gist of the narrative has been given towards the end of the first canto. In the present part only the story of Janaki from her birth to her arrival at Ayodhya has been narrated. It might therefore be said that the full story of the life of Janaki has not been presented by the poet. But whatever portion of the story is presented it is not small for an epic.

The second canto begins with the description of Mithila. While singing the glory of the great king Janaka who even in his physical body had attained a bodiless state, an elaborate picture of his empire—land, society and social system—has been presented. The poet imagines that those must have been the golden days of glory in terms of physical and spiritual prosperity of Mithila.

All sons were bound to their fathers in duty,
All daughters to their mothers;
The women were blessed in that they were
Their mother-in-laws and husbands'It should be true followers.
The servants were as friends of heart
And the friends not less than one's own brothers
The brother, in turn, was one's very life
Goodwill all around life was without fears.

The hospitality of Mithila is already universally known :

Every home had water and seat
Set apart for the god-like guest!
He was welcomed with food in plenty
Together with all confort and rest!
Every path of the city with drinking water
For the wayfarer was well furnished!
The watchman was not needed at all
And lock was totally banished!

After depicting Mithila as the blessed and blissful land of freedom, the most awe-inspiring glory and grandeur of Lanka under the reign of Ravana has been presented:

Fire, the foremost of gods,
Worked as cook at his place;
Yama, relinquishing his usual post,
Served there as a stranger commonplace:
Wind was the sweeper of mansions
And Varuna, but the water-sprinkler;
Indra himself supervised the bath of Ravana
And other gods washed his vesture!

The second canto ends with the prayer to Lord Vishnu by Earth, as she is tormented by the tyrannies of Ravana, the story of boons being granted to Ravana by Lord Mahadeva and the assurance of the incarnation of Rama in the near future given by Lord Vishnu to her (Earth).

The mystery of Sita's birth has been unravelled in the third canto. It has been narrated in the *Adbhuta Ramayan* that Sita was the daughter of Mandodari. Accepting this very basis, the poet has shown in this canto as to how Sita was actually born

to Mandodari and why she came to be hidden under the furrow of Mithila.

The gist of the story is as follows. The sage Gritsamada, who lived on the Rishyamuk mountain in the Vindhyas, had hundred sons, but no daughter. His wife prayed to him for a daughter. Wishing to have one, the sage sprinkled 'Mantra'-enchanted water on a pitcher full of milk and then, giving it to his wife, told her that ten days hence whoever would drink the milk of that pitcher, would see the birth of Lakshami (consort of Lord Vishnu or goddess of wealth) in the house. Saying so, he kept the pitcher in a corner of the hut. Just at that time Ravana arrived there on his mission to realise tax from the sage-community. Extracting blood from the bodies of the sages, he collected it in the same pitcher and taking it as a pitcher of victory, he carried it away to Lanka. Giving the pitcher to Mandodari Ravana told her that it contained the poisonous blood of the sages and so it should not be kept carelessly at any random place. Having given this direction, he at once set off on a journey abroad. When Ravana did not return even after a long lapse of time, Mandodari wishing to die in her pang of separation, drank that very blood mixed with the milk, taking it absolutely for poison. Consequently, instead of dying, she conceived. Now, in the absence of her husband, Mandodari was subject to another worry. Being wise, however, she set out with a mid-wife on the pretext of going on a pilgrimage and coming far from her empire to Mithila she got the child out of her womb with the help of an operation and, sprinkling nectar on it, buried it under the ground there. It was the same child that Janaka chanced to find while ploughing the land, later known as Sita.

In the second canto itself the poet has made Ravana state before Lord Mahadeva the condition on which he should die :

If ever I have sexual desire
Towards my own daughter
Or speak harshly to you or one
Whom you love and foster,
Then may I either die fighting
Or to thee I must surrender.
Even after death, O Lord!
Thy feet alone be my shelter!

It is in the third canto that the poet has testified to it that Sita was the daughter of Ravana alone and none else and that an evil

desire towards her actually possessed his heart. Besides this, he so tyrannised the sages and the innocent people that the accumulated sins paved the way to his death. But brave as he was, he died what may be called the death of a warrior and was ultimately granted liberation from rebirth.

The fifth canto begins with the rejoicings at Janaka's court on the occasion of Janaki's birth. It is followed by an account of Janaki's childlike frolics and the depiction of her matchless beauty. The story of Janaka's order to his ministers to go out in search of a suitable match for Sita, her going round the city with her mother's permission, the description of the market of Mithila, the incident of Shiva's bow being lifted up and strung by Sita, the account of this happening being reported to Sunayana and Janaka and the narrative of Janaka taking a vow to hold a 'Dhanusha Yajna' (Bow stringing ceremony) come under the range of the fourth canto.

The criteria for giving out the daughter to a husband has been laid down by the poet in unequivocal terms :

One who in beauty, might
And virtues the daughter excels
Well deserves to be her match
The poet hereby counsels.
If the groom be aged
One and a quarter time the bride,
He is the first rate
By all means to be tried.
The doubly aged groom is second;
Beyond that the groom be rejected.
If one chooses the abnormally aged,
The chooser to hell is deported !
The groom's age alone is thus
The test primary and first:
Consideration of all other things
Is secondary, coming only next.

The evil results of violating this criteria have also been indicated by the poet:

The couple of conflicting qualities are unfortunate;
Uncalled for quarrel becomes their perpetual fate.
Where there is discord miseries surely abound!
The couple reside in hell since demons play around!

Hence :

To give away your daughter as bride,
Find her a suitable match to guide.

The fifth canto begins with Sunayana's anxiety when she hears of the severe nature of Janaka's vow regarding Sita's marriage. Every day Sita is sent to worship goddess Gouri. It is the custom in Mithila that the virgin girl worships the goddess Gouri (Shiva's consort) with the ambition of getting a husband from a noble family. By making Sita perform this act the poet seems to add greater glory to this very convention of Mithila. Sita asks Gouri for a boon and she hears an oracle from above that her longing would be fulfilled.

The sixth canto opens with the scene of contending heroes failing in their attempt to lift Shiva's bow. Then the account of Rama and Lakshamana travelling to Buxar along with the sage Vishwamitra is given. After the slaying of Tadaka and Maricha Ramachandra expresses his desire to visit the city of Mithila which is granted by the sage. This canto ends with a prayer to the Ganga and the description of the brothers, stay on her bank.

At the beginning of the seventh canto Vishwamitra enters Mithila with Rama and Lakshamana. We hear from their mouth the splendid beauty of the land. It is followed by the redemption of Ahalya and their nightly rest at the hermitage of Goutama. Unlike the current story, the poet does not mention the modesty of Ahalya being outraged by Indra. As soon as Indra, assuming Goutama's form, steps into his hermitage with the definite purpose of breaking Goutama's penance, Goutama returns and, seeing Indra there, flies into a rage. It is after this incident that Ahalya comes out from the hut. Such a framework of the story reveals Kavivar's respectful attitude to the womenfolk. By not mentioning Indra violating Ahalya Kavivar seems to save women from indignity.

The eighth canto is entirely devoted to the description of the land and people of Mithila. Vishwamitra's stay in Janakpur along with his disciples, his interview with Janaka, the introduction of Rama and Lakshamana to him by Vishwamitra and the informal talk between them form the content of this canto. The canto ends with a description of the night.

Canto nine begins with the various conjectures made by the lady friends of Janaki with regard to Rama. One of them tells her that Janaka had better wed Sita to Rama without caring for his vow of

'Dhanush Yajna'. The others assure that Rama was sure to lift the mighty bow and yet some others express fear that the feat is beyond Rama's capacity. Sita goes into raptures at these talks and gives a sermon on how daughters must obey their parents. Sunayana, on her part, counsels Janaka to get Sita united with Rama in holy wedlock even at the cost of violating his vow. Janaka consoles her in proper terms.

Canto ten begins with the announcement by Janaka in the open assemblage of common people as well as of great personages that Rama should make an attempt at lifting Shiva's bow. If he succeeds, so much so good, but even if he fails he would give away his daughter to him, vow or no vow. Lakshamana bursts into anger at Janaka's expression of doubt about Rama. Finally, Rama lifts the bow. It is decided that messengers be sent to Ayodhya to invite Dasharatha to grace the occasion with his presence. The tenth canto ends creating an atmosphere of universal jubilation.

The eleventh canto describes the sending of messengers to Ayodhya, deliverarance of the invitation-letter to Dasharatha, his outburst of joy on getting the news and his consultation with Guru Vashistha. It further describes the journey of the bridegroom's party for Mithila, their meeting with Rama and their rest during the night.

In the twelfth canto Janaka and Dasharatha tell each other about their respective ancestors. On the occasion of daughter's marriage there is a custom in Mithila to produce the geneology of both the sides through the Panjikars, that is, index-keepers ('Siddhanta ceremony') and then there is an exchange of promises between them. This is followed by preparations for marriage.

The fourteenth canto offers a graphic description of the royal preparations of Janaka's farewell to his daughter and son-in-law. There is also a moving description of the four sisters being given a tearful farewell wherein, in between sobs and sniffles, the mother does not forget to give her daughters the customary advice on how a daughter-in-law should present her best behaviour at the in-laws, house. The intervention of Parashurama on the way, his rage and the curbing of his hauteur by Rama comprise the fourteenth canto. It is to be noted that in the commonly prevalent story of Rama Parashurama arrives just after the lifting of the bow, whereas in this epic he is made to appear on the marriage party's way to Ayodhya.

The fifteenth and the last canto opens with the arrival of the four brothers at Ayodhya along with their wives. The queen mothers get gifts ('Bain') distributed among the people. On such occasions there

is a custom in Mithila of distributing 'Bain', i.e. small gifts among relatives and neighbours. The whole capital of Ayodhya is agog with triumphant joy. Sita and her sisters impress their mothers-in-law with their good looks and charming behaviour. The good name of Ramachandra begins to spread all around:

Like the moon of 'Ashwin'
Or like 'Makhana' and curd
The good name of Rama
Spreads like life-breath in the world!
From over the whole of mankind
The fear of enemies, robbers and demons
Vanishes like the fog dispersing
At the appearance of the sun in the heavens!
The whole of 'Aryavata' gets liberated
From the misdeeds of the wicked
As miseries, poverty and evils vanish
And the land and air become universally sacred!
Seeing the noble actions of Sita and Rama
Love's reign over humanity has started:
Learning good ways and manners calm
All hearts are heavenward elevated!

This is the gist of the story as presented in *Amba Charita*. Prof. Ramanath Jha makes the following observation with regard to this work:

"Whether one takes its story or its narrative style or its language, it is equally fascinating in every respect. The epic is extremely interesting and the flow required in a narrative of this kind is natural. In fact, among all the epics of Maithili *Amba Charita* is novel not only in point of its design, but also in its style and language."

The entire book abounds in maxims like resplendent gems embroidered everywhere. And they come when it is most apposite and keeping in tune with the context, so that they are driven home to the reader direct. Some examples may be observed:

So the wise act in the world
With deliberation perfect and proper,
Survey the ground before every step
And drink only filtered water.

A gift to the undeserved
Brings results most accursed !

If even an enemy comes to our door
We should receive him with seat and water pure
First, enquire about his general welfare
Then offer him respectfully cordial hopitality and care!

Anxiety is a veritable hell
In which the anxious always dwell

Sometimes the good have to suffer
Even for the fault of the evil-doer

Eternal righteousness consists in speaking ever
The truth that is pleasant, but never bitter!
So a falsehood, however plesant, is ever a falsehood
It is to be avoided to attain what is intrinsically good!

To sum up, the striking achievement of *Amba Charita* lies in its perfect demonstration of the variegated aspects of the social life. Spontaneous flow of its language, the glorification of the specific Maithil ways and manners, the highlighting of the customs and practices of the land, a depiction which catches the splended beauty of its fertile land, the sights and sounds of its nature, the unravelling of the rich and dignified Maithil culture and civilization and the fragrance of the blossom-like maxims lie scattered on every page of the book.

Of the fourteen works coming under Kavivar's poetic creation eleven are published in the book-form. Among the rest which were published in various magazines two are mixed compositions ('Champu Kavya') and one is a long narrative poem ('Prabandhakavya').

Conclusion

In course of evaluating the poetic works of Kavivar Sitaram Jha an attempt has been made to underline their distinctive qualities at appropriate places. Kavivar's poetry can be considered to offer the true cultural reflection of Mithila. While other poets have only touched upon some or the other of the speical aspects of Mithila, Kavivar has highlighted the Maithil culture in its totality. He is the most popular poet of this age. The main factor contributing to his popularity consists in the articulation that he has given to the common people's life-style in Mithila in their own idiom. Numerous quotes from his poems have come to stay permanently on the lips of even the uneducated. Prior to him only three poets could so inflame the hearts of the masses. Among them, Vidyapati comes first, Manabodha next and Kavishwar Chanda Jha the last. After Chanda Jha, it was Kavivar alone who achieved this unique glory. In the modern age Kavivar's contribution to the task of uplifting the Maithili tongue to the peak of popularity through poetic medium is certainly stupendous. He was a wizard of the people's tongue.

Common man's language has this capacity that even foreign words are digested by it either in toto or in deformed ways, and such words become the very part and parcel of the language proper. According to philologists this is the characteristic of a living language. In the poetry of Kavivar words of English, Arabic etc. are used with such naturalness that they look entirely appropriate in Maithili. Hundreds of words like telephone, police, hotel, division, biscuit, coat, pant, store, railway, 'hafim' (opium), 'jebi' (pocket), saheb (officer or high person) etc. have found a place in Kavivar's works according to requirement. We can study the following lines from *Unata Basat* from this view-point.

Biscit lasoon O pyaj khay
Hotal me botal li uthay
Chhathi hamar dhanik mandal sahay
Dai chhi sab thal lekchar bahay

We take biscuits, garlic and onion
And nurse bottles of wine in hotels:
Thanks to the aid given by the rich
Everywhere we deliver model lectures.

But the use of 'Tatsama' (original Sanskrit word) is no less prominent in his poetry and that has its reason. Kavivar was a scholar of Sanskrit and the syntax of Maithili tongue is mostly based on Sanskrit. But like other Sanskrit scholars he has not packed his poetry with such 'Tatsama' words so as to make it unintelligible. To the extent he was liberal in adopting current words of foreign origin, he was not generous in picking up unprevalent Sanskrit words.

The chief forte of his works has, however, been satire. It seems as if humour and satire were intrinsic to the soil of Mithila. The oblique expression that is found even in the rustic's conversation sometimes astonishes the most learned of people. Kavivar, who was a son of the soil, could not have helped this element finding a prominent place in his poetry. This is the reason why Kavivar commands high respect among the masses of Mithila.

Besides being a poet he was also an 'Acharya' (Professor). Hence he also analysed the merits and demerits of poetry, gave annotations on figures of speech in Maithili and both composed and interpreted Poetics. *Alankara Darpana* is an example of his poetic talent as well as his knowledge of poetics. While his scholarship is well demonstrated in his definitions and interpretations of figures of speech, his poetic talent has achieved marvels in giving poetic illustrations of such figures. His command over verse and metre was thorough. No other poet seems to excel him in using so many verse patterns. The hardest metre seemed to turn easy at the mere touch of his pen. He regarded metrical composition as an essential component of poetry. He never approved of poetry shorn of rhyme. He was an instant composer. It appears he could gain his proper articulation only in poetry. It is widely known that even his letters and notes used to be mostly in verse.

Though he reached the apex of poetic genius Sitaram Jha did not completely give up prose-writing It is a fact that no collection of his prose works is published, nor have we a sufficient number of his prose writings on a single subject. But a few of his scattered essays, some pieces of memoirs, his prefaces to books, one or two of his presidential addresses are published and they are sufficient to enlighten the reader as to the type of prose he wrote. The sharp and

sensitive language that we find in the prose of his 'Guru' Maha Mahopadhyaya Muralidhar Jha is absent from his prose. The language of his prose is scholarly, still it is not heavy-footed because his poetic talent somehow enters into his expressions even here. The following example may help us in assessing the critical worth of his prose:

"People are not brought to good ways so much by a government run by rigorous laws or by fear of social punishment, as with the help of good literature. Hence 'Shruti' and 'Smriti' were made in Krit-yuga, the Ramayana was written in Treta and Puranas were created in 'Dwapar'. Following their example the writers in 'Kali-yuga' have taken to creating good pieces of literature."

On the basis of his writings in prose that are available, he could not be rated as an established prose-writer. His poetic personality was like a huge banyan tree under whose shadow neither his prose nor any other literary form could take roots.

The question of spelling in Maithili has been a subject of debate for long. During his time too different scholars gave currency to different spellings. He was himself against diverse forms of spellings. But it was his wish that scholars should standardise spellings by mutual consultations and that spelling should be nearer to the Maithili as spoken by the people.

In the first part of *Alankara Darpana* he has expressed his view on the subject in the following terms:

"In Maithili the practice of writing is in great disarray. Everyone has his own way of writing. In fact, the more we avoid delay in disciplining this, the better it will be for us. Therefore, if all agree to it, so far as 'Tadbhava' (indigenous forms derived from Sanskrit) and 'Deshaja' (purely indigenous) words are concerned, let us use स in the place of श, ख for ष, ब for व, न for ण, छ for क्ष and य or ज for य as it may be pronounced."

He was also an editor. The Mithila Moda was brought out under his editorship from 1920 to 1927. Through his editorial comments he amply highlighted the problems of the day.

In a history of literature three factors have been considered to be worthy of attention in order to determine the position of a poet—first, how far the poet in question has received the influence of his predecessors and, while receiving it, how far he has maintained his own originality: secondly, to what extent, the

contemporary poets have been influenced by him: thridly, in what ways he has been received by society.

Kavivar was thoroughly acquainted with the rich tradition of Maithili literature coming as it did from antiquity. He was acutely conscious of this tradition. Chanda Jha and Jivan Jha had been the fountain streams of inspiration for him. Chanda Jha had enriched Maithili with his *Mithila Bhasha Ramayana* and other independent poems. In all probability it was from him that Kavivar took his cue of poetic composition and by taking to the path charted by him, Kavivar added a new dimension to it. Few other poets had received such public acclaim as he.

A host of young poets were directly or indirectly benefited by Kavivar Sitaram Jha's genius. The most prominent among them are the present day 'greats' of Maithili poetry—like Yatri, Madhup and Suman—who have had their share of inspiration from him.

As regards Yatri, his poetic career itself saw its advent under the guidance of Sitaram Jha. Kavivar's imprint is clearly discernible on the earlier composition of Yatri. It was the influence of Kavivar's writings alone that shaped the sharp and shining edge of language and satire that we notice in Yatri's later compostions. Yatri's language which gives out the typical aroma of the Maithil soil is the direct outcome of Kavivar's influence. As regards social content of poetry Yatri pushed Kavivar's reformist spirit further ahead and invested it with a revolutionary fire. Hence a foretaste of Yatri's poetic spontaneity can easily be discerned in Kavivar's writings.

Kavichudamani Madhup was also influenced by Kavivar's language, the grace of his versification and the poetic ornamenation. The influence of Kavivar's poetry can easily be seen in Madhup's popular songs of the early stage.

Though the poetic body of Suman, becuase of its mature and profound content, is not so natural as that of the two great poets aforementioned, yet the scholars can still trace Kavivar's influence in the glimpses of Maithil culture that appear at frequent intervals in Suman's poetry.

Among the people of later generations it is Amar alone who seems to have received his effect in the largest measure. Besides his *Gudagudi* and *Yugachakra* which bear a definite imprint of Kavivar, his other compositions of humorous, satirical and topical contents give ample evidence of Kavivar's influence on both the levels, that is, language and subject matter. If we keenly observe the lucidity of poetic expression, mellifluence of language and the striking quality

of imagery in Govind Jha, the clear reflection of Kavivar would stand out before us. Thus the poetic stream that Kavivar channelised went on with its unrestrained flow in different directions till at last it reached a group of poets of the latest generation in the present times.

Kavivar Sitaram Jha will ever be remembered as the chief architect of the modern Maithili language. The task of making a critical exploration of the entire literature of this blessed son of Maithili in order to bring out more areas of its excellence to light, is yet to be completed. Only a revaluation of his poetry can further reveal the full worth of the achievements of this great poet.

Appendix

Published books of Kavivar

1. *Atichar Nirnaya*
2. *Amba Charita*
3. *Alankar Darpana (Two parts)*
4. *Unatv Basat*
5. *Updeshaksha Mala*
6. *Geeta Tattwa Sudha*
7. *Padhua Charitra Tatha Purvapar Vyavhar*
8. *Parichaya Darpana*
9. *Bhukamp Varnana*
10. *Maithili Kavya Khataras*
11. *Maithili Kavyopavana*
12. *Ratna Sangrah*
13. *Loka Lakshana*
14. *Vyavahar Vivek*
15. *Siksha-Sudha*

Some other publications in Hindi/Sanskrit

16. *Avakahada Chakra Sahit Jyotish Praveshika*
17. *Adbhut Sagar*
18. *Ahibalachakra*
19. *Arya Saptatih*
20. *Kalapanchang Vivek*
21. *Keshaviya Jatak*
22. *Kerala Prashna*
23. *Kritya Vivek*
24. *Khet Kautuk*
25. *Ganit Sopan (Original)*
26. *Ganit Chandrika (Original)*
27. *Garga Manorama*
28. *Gol Paribhasa*

29. *Gol Bodh*
30. *Chapiya Trikonamitih*
31. *Grahaphal Darpana*
32. *Graha Laghav*
33. *Janmapatra Prabodh*
34. *Janmapatra Vyavastha*
35. *Janmapatra Vidhan*
36. *Jatakalankara*
37. *Jatakabharana*
38. *Jataka Parijat*
39. *Jaimini Sutra*
40. *Jyotish Shastra Prayojana (Essays)*
41. *Jyotish Sopan*
42. *Tajik Nilkanthi*
43. *Tithi Nirupanam*
44. *Dhara Chakra*
45. *Nahnidattapanchavinshatika*
46. *Padmakosh (Varshaphal)*
47. *Varnavyavastha Vivek*
48. *Vivah Vrindavan*
49. *Vakratichar Nirnaya*
50. *Vastu Nirnaya*
51. *Vastu Sagari*
52. *Vastu Sarini*
53. *Vrihatparashar Hoda*
54. *Vrihajjatak*
55. *Bhava Prakash*
56. *Bhava Kautuhal*
57. *Bhava Phaladhyaya*
58. *Bhava Sagari*
59. *Madhya Parashari*
60. *Man Sagari*
61. *Melapak Vivek*
62. *Muhurt Chintamani*
63. *Muhurt Martanda*
64. *Rekhaganit*
65. *Lagna Chandrika*
66. *Lagnapatra Pradeep*
67. *Lagnavarahi*
68. *Lagnavivek*
69. *Laghu Jatak*

70. *Laghu Parashari*
71. *Lilavati*
72. *Lupta Samvastsaradiniranay*
73. *Shakun Vivek*
74. *Shishu Bodh*
75. *Shighra Vivek*
76. *Samayashuddhi Vivek*
77. *Saravali*
78. *Siddhant Shiromani*
79. *Sugamalagna Jatak*
80. *Surya Siddhant*
81. *Stri Jatak*
82. *Shat Panchashika*
83. *Kshetramiti*
84. *Gaya Shraddh Paddhati*
85. *Grahaprayog Arthat Grahashanti*
86. *Mool Shanti*
87. *Vastu Shanti*
88. *Vashishthi Havan Paddhati*
89. *Shat Rudriya Paddhati*
90. *Varnavyavastha Ka Sankshipt Itihas*
91. *Kalpanchang Vivek*
92. *Samay Shuddhi Vivek*
93. *Janmapatra Vidhan*
94. *Stri Jatak*